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ABSTRACT

This book discusses new developments in the discipline of English. It contains six essays. In "The Ghetto of the Negro Novel: A Theme with Variations," Blyden Jackson explores why the setting of the Negro novel is in the city ghetto rather than in the rural Southland. Albert Marckwardt investigates the concept of "standard English" in both its linguistic and its sociological dimensions. In "Rhetoric: How Do You Carve an Elephant?" Robert Gorrell reveals a positive approach to instruction in composition that replaces teaching negative rules and drilling on usage with teaching "Understanding," an understanding solidly based in the art of rhetoric. Arthur Eastman leads his audience to discover with him "more things" revealed through literature, in this case through Hamlet's discovery of his kinship with humanity. In "The Reunion of Historical and Literary Study," David Fowler urges the reader to look beyond a narrow interpretation and fragmented view of the discipline of English to "a new integrated vision and a new vitality" that reunite historical and literary study. William Iverson urges the reader to accept the challenge and privilege of guiding children in the process of defining themselves through language. (This document previously announced as ED 058 189.) (CK)

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The DISCOVERY of ENGLISH

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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Foreword

Each age that is alive to its time and to its responsibilities is an age of discovery. In our profession, the teaching of English, and in our professional organization, the National Council of Teachers of English, 1971 is the year of discovery of our discipline. To be sure, the subject of English has been discovered many times in the past, but only the coastal portion of the domain has been revealed. In our search for the undiscovered, we hope to come closer to its heartland. This, of course, will not be the final search. For in the discipline of English, as well as in Horatio's philosophy, "There are more things . . . than are dreamt of . . ." to be discovered.

This year three major events contribute to our exploration. First, in July the International Conference on the Teaching and Learning of English was held at the University of York, England. Here five hundred American, British, and Canadian teachers of English met to continue our search together, a search that was begun five years ago at the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English at Dartmouth College. Then, during their sixty-first annual convention in November, Council members from across the nation met to explore the theme "The Undiscovered" and ways we can involve more effectively the youth we serve, the young in our profession, and all racial and ethnic minority groups who are part of our society. They are the undiscovered resources of our discipline, our profession, and our nation.

Finally, 1971 is the publication year of *The Discovery of English*. Each year, NCTE invites selected distinguished members of our profession to prepare lectures in the areas of their special competency and deliver them at colleges and schools far from large urban and cultural centers.

Blyden Jackson explores why the setting of the Negro novel is in the city ghetto rather than in the rural Southland; Albert Marckwardt investigates the concept of "standard English" in both its linguistic and its sociological dimensions; Robert Gorrell reveals a positive approach to instruction in composition that replaces teaching negative rules and drilling on usage with teaching "understanding," an understanding solidly based in the art of rhetoric; Arthur Eastman leads us to discover with him "more things" revealed through literature, in this case through Hamlet's discovery

of his kinship with humanity: David Fowler urges us to look beyond a narrow interpretation and fragmented view of our discipline to "a new integrated vision and a new vitality" that reunite historical and literary study; and William Iverson calls us to our challenge and our privilege of guiding children in the process of defining themselves through language. These are the discoveries the National Council of Teachers of English is proud to share in 1971.

San Diego City Schools
Summer 1971

ROBERT A. BENNETT
President, NCTE

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The Ghetto of the Negro Novel: A Theme with Variations

Blyden Jackson

BLYDEN JACKSON, professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, witnessed in person the final phase of the Harlem Renaissance of Negro writing when he spent part of the depression year 1931–32 as a graduate student in English at Columbia University. Born in Paducah, Kentucky, in 1910, he grew up in Louisville and took a B.A. at Wilberforce University. Between his beginnings at Columbia and his return to graduate study, he taught in a WPA night school and in junior high schools in Louisville. Launching his college teaching career at Fisk University in 1945, he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in English from the University of Michigan. Dr. Jackson has served as professor of English, head of the Department of English, and dean of the Graduate School at Southern University. A specialist in Negro literature, he has written extensively on the subject for journals in the field of English and contributed articles on Negro writers to the *Encyclopedia Americana*. Honors he has held include Julius Rosenwald and University of Michigan fellowships, the presidency of the College Language Association, and the vice-presidency of the Southern Association of Land Grant Colleges and State Universities. He is chairman of the College Section of NCTE.

In these days when more than a million and a half Negroes live in the five boroughs of New York City and another million on the Southside and elsewhere in Chicago, as well as scattered millions more in places like Watts and Hough, or even in Atlanta or New Orleans, it may be difficult to realize what the typical Negro has actually been for most of the time he has spent as an adornment of the American scene. What he has actually been is a figure of earth, not a denizen of the city streets. Until the Civil War he worked on a Southern plantation or in some job connected with a staple-crop economy dominated by the felt needs and the ethos of the class which is often called the planters of the Old South. After the war he got emancipated from the legal status of chattel slavery. He did not get emancipated from his Southern home. His life went on far too much as it had been before the adoption of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. He still lived in, or near, fields which were for him the theater of his daily toil. He was still largely the hapless victim of some white-man-boss. And when he lifted up his eyes to contemplate the horizons which surrounded him, he could still see only Southern sights, still hear only Southern sounds, and still find the farthest ranges of his physical universe only in the astronomy of a Southern sky.

Statistical data confirm, and document, the Southern agrarianism of the Negro throughout by far the greater part of his American existence. In 1870, at the first census after the Civil War, 92 percent of all the Negroes in America—I have somewhat rounded off all the figures which will follow—4,420,000 out of a total of 4,880,000, lived in the South, a South that was not composed primarily of towns. Thirty years, about a generation, later, at the turn of the twentieth century, out of 8,830,000 Negroes—almost twice as many, incidentally, as in 1870—7,920,000, 89 percent of the total, still lived in a South where they were still largely adjuncts of the Southern soil. Indeed, as late as 1930, even after the passage of another thirty years and

the coming of virtually another generation, 9,360,000, or 78 percent, of 11,890,000 American Negroes, still had not left the South and still, in most of their personal careers, were repeating much of the pattern of existence of their parents and grandparents, and great-grandparents.

Yet, when one turns from Negro life to Negro literature, and especially to the Negro novel, one may well experience almost immediately the shock of a sharp and powerfully arresting recognition. The Negro novel is a city novel. It almost always has been. It is not that the Negro novel lacks absolutely any connections with the rural South. But the contrast in it of its prevailing setting with the most apparent fact of Negro location in America is so almost incredibly enormous. The Southern agrarian setting does not even begin to appear in the Negro novel in any degree or to any extent commensurate with its actual, and, for a long time, virtually ubiquitous involvement with Negro life. The first Negro novel, *Clotel* (1853), concentrates as much on Richmond and New Orleans, and Washington, as it does on rural Mississippi. The second Negro novel, *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857), establishes by far the major portion of its action in Philadelphia. And all of the big Negro novels—big in terms both of their reputation and their influence—like *Native Son* and *Invisible Man*, easily the two biggest of them all, tend to be either set within an urban ghetto or shaped and controlled by the culture of the town.

What accounts for this anomaly? Why are the memorable scenes of the Negro novel set in urban ghettos? Why are not these same scenes drenched instead with the physical atmosphere of the land of cotton, the rhythms of growing seasons in subtropical climes, the images of hoe hands and roustabouts and of Negroes walking down some lonesome Southern road? What must we know, or, at least, suspect, about Negroes, about their inner thoughts and their private lives, to understand what well may be the meaning of the Negro novel's obvious predilection

for the Negro ghetto and its apparently interrelated aversion to the Southern agrarian scene?

There is, of course, no certain answer. But it may help to recollect the old-time darky, he of whom the white folks were themselves so ecstatically enamored. He was, in provenience, a plantation Negro. And he represented everything which Negroes, given the freedom to express their unvarnished thoughts, viewed as the opposite of all of the ideas about themselves of which they approved. Happy-go-lucky, as docile as a child, and as uneducable, insensitive to slight and injury, this Negro satisfied the white man's fond hypothesis that Negroes were born to be enslaved. With the demise of slavery, therefore, this Negro belonged, for his own good as well as in the best interests of the state, within the strict confines of color caste. This Negro must never be permitted to think himself as good as any white man. "Would you want your daughter to marry one of them?" And so the "good" white man perpetuated, if not his plantation, at least his plantation legend. In song and story, as well as in the picture of God's universe which he instilled into every properly bred white child before that child could read or write, he kept alive the image of the right kind of Negro, who knew his place and stayed therein, whose head, like Old Black Joe's, was always bending low, and whose native habitat, as divine fiat had made it clear, was beneath the foot of every white man in that hierarchy of law and custom of which segregation was the keystone and discrimination the breath of life.

A libelous fraud was what Negroes called this darky. So much of him offended them that they could reconcile themselves to no attribute associated with him. Among other things, as we have seen, he lived in the agrarian South. Negro novelists, consequently, have tended to leave him there. Their Negro—the Negro of their very real subjective fact rather than of the white supremacist's self-hypnotic autistic thought—has been too hostile to the white man's racial creed to bask in the sunshine of any white man's supposedly seraphic South. And so, if it has served

no other function, the ghetto of the Negro novel has served the Negro novelist as an objective correlative for his disdain of the pretensions of color caste. Set this ghetto against the grinning darkies in blackface minstrelsy or the groveling black servitors of literature like "Marse Chan" and one has a physical setting which announces its dissent from the standard preferences of the cult of white skins *über Alles*. Surely as much as anyone the Negro novelist knows where Negroes have actually had their homes. Surely, too, he could have placed those homes in his fiction to correspond with actuality, in the rural South, just as, incidentally, he could have made his characters talk like "Brer Rabbit" or cut the fool like Stepin Fetchit. That he chose the ghetto as his symbol, rather than the plantation, is a deliberate act of some significance. It is probably also a most eloquent indication of his basic attitudes toward color caste, and a strong suggestion that he shares, or feels he shares, those attitudes essentially with all Negroes.

If, however, the ghetto of the Negro novel is thus the kind of dual revelation which it well may be, it is also, then, conceivably an entree into, not merely the consciousness of a group of artists, but also the collective consciousness of Negroes as a cohesive whole. One must thus assume, if only from the persistence of the ghetto in the Negro novel, a similar persistence among Negroes of disaffection with the plantation legend, as with the entire body of behavior and belief which that legend was created to make seem true. This disaffection constitutes a theme, an underlying diapason in perennial black reaction to the white man's world, which seems exempt from change. But themes, in life and literature, as in music, may be exposed to variation, without destruction of their fundamental character. The ghetto of the Negro novel is a theme that does retain its fundamental character. Always it speaks of how very much Negroes resent the indignities which America has forced upon them. Always it whispers, as it were, the words of Cinquez in one of the *Amistad* trials, "Give us free.

Give us free." [1] Always it calls for the end of one era of American life and the beginning of a genuine new day. But it has done this now for well more than three generations. And it has become a theme with variations. As time has passed, indeed, it has never varied in its basic composition. But it has elaborated upon that basic composition in ways that have in themselves been varied. It has thus afforded us, therefore, a picture of the Negro mind which reflects both a permanent cast of Negro thought and the sensitivity of that cast to changes in the Negro's immediate environment.

Before the Harlem Renaissance, the ghetto of the Negro novel was largely an explication of Negro resourcefulness in adjusting to a culture aggressively intolerant of Negroes. The years of this ghetto were, indeed, the years when Negroes had but little choice except to attempt mere brute survival, on terms acceptable to the dominant whites. The shape of the early ghetto of the Negro novel did acquire, then, to a great extent the shape of the Negro experience of life immediately pertaining to it. But with the Renaissance an external environment changed. The Renaissance itself celebrated an entity which it called the New Negro. This New Negro was a creature of hope and pride, an emblem of a race now not only able to survive, but also to boast of an innate capacity of its own for going beyond mere brute survival to the enjoyment, on terms supplied by itself, of the good things of life. And so the ghetto of the Negro novel of the Harlem Renaissance is the ghetto on a buoyant note. Wrong as has been color caste, bad as have been its ravages on Negro life, says this ghetto, they have hurt the Negro less than the scramble for gain and the repression of natural desires have dehumanized the American white. Inviolate against the Philistines and Babbitts, the Negro, it continues, has preserved his link with the world of healthy instinct. A familiar

[1] William A. Owens, *Slave Mutiny: The Revolt on the Schooner Amistad* (New York: The John Day Company, 1953), p. 234.

strain in the novel of the Renaissance is the Negro who passes for white and then returns, a pilgrim from whose eyes the scales have fallen, to his own people. For joy, like the innocence of a good weekend romp at the Savoy, flourished in the ghetto of the Renaissance.

The urban North was then not only an escape. It was also the promised land. Like a country at the end of a rainbow, it was where Negroes, at last, could really be themselves. The South had inhibited them. And it had also kept close watch over them. In effect, in the South the "paterollers" were always there, seeing to it not only that Negroes did not get "uppity," but seeing to it also that Negroes never forgot that they were living in a white folks' world. How different, however, was the Northern Negro ghetto. It brought together a throng of Negroes who, from their very density, gained anonymity as well as a fraternal communion with each other. And so in the ghetto, away from the white folks' prying eyes and the example of the white folks' enervating ways, Negroes could talk Negro talk, laugh Negro laughter, indulge themselves in Negro ways of having Negro fun, and yet, in their serious moments, of which their self-controlled ghetto existence was far from entirely bereft, contribute to a common Negro conception of a better social order and join with other Negroes in efforts to make that conception, after all, come true.

Not for nothing, hence, did the titles of some novels of the Renaissance read as they do: *Home to Harlem, One Way to Heaven, The Walls of Jericho, Dark Princess, God Sends Sunday, Not Without Laughter*. The Negro novel of the Renaissance is, of course, not all of one piece. Sometimes it satirizes Negroes. Sometimes it pillories them. Its ghetto, too, has its sordid and forbidding aspects. Yet, even so, its ghetto is remarkably consistent in its proclamation both that Negroes are fine people and that in their new homes in the urban North they will build a new Jerusalem. The final scene of Langston Hughes' Negro novel of the Renaissance, *Not Without Laughter*, occurs

on a Chicago street. A summer night has softened the harsh daytime contours of Chicago's Southside. Sandy, the boy who approaches manhood in the novel, is walking home with his mother. Neither of them is Chicago-born, and both of them already know that the Chicago ghetto is far from perfect. But somewhere near them, in a small storefront church, a little band of black worshippers, in soft Southern speech, is singing an old Negro spiritual, "By and By." It is the ghetto of the Harlem Renaissance.

That variation of the ghetto, however, apparently was not to last, nor was the Negro mood which gave every evidence of sustaining it. The Harlem Renaissance was a phenomenon of the 1920s. In America the 1920s were followed by a Great Depression. Nowhere in America during the depression were soaring spirits the order of the day. In ghetto after Northern ghetto in "real life," moreover, Negroes, many of them migrants from the South, were discovering the shortcomings of the promised land. Out of that discovery, moreover, emanated the variation in the novelistic ghetto which may be found, among other places, in Richard Wright's masterpiece, *Native Son*, the ghetto which is almost surely the ghetto of the Negro novel in its classic form and which, in great likelihood, is nearer even to that form in Ann Petry's 1946 edition of *The Street* than in the *Native Son* to which *The Street* had over five years to assimilate itself. The ghetto of *Native Son* creates monsters. The message it conveys inheres not simply in the violence of its protagonist when he smothers to death, ostensibly by accident, white Mary Dalton. It is contained as deeply in the romantic aspirations of this protagonist and a black confidante of his when, idling along on a Chicago street, they play-act at being white. And it finally comes home full force in the play, not novel, *A Raisin in the Sun*, when Lena Younger, using her recently deceased husband's life insurance (an irony that should not go unnoted), begins the purchase for her family of a house in white Clybourne Park, outside the ghetto, where her grand-

son may grow up free from the ghetto's effect of slow assassination on its occupants.

The ghetto of the Negro novel of the Age of Wright was the ghetto of unqualified integration. It marked the manner in which the ghetto as an exciting new frontier, the ghetto of the Harlem Renaissance, had turned into the ghetto of a city of dreadful night, the ghetto of *The Street*. And then it counselled what to do. It admonished escape. But that variation of the ghetto now also has had its day. To some extent it has been replaced by an act of retrogression, a return to the New Negro of the Harlem Renaissance with his accent on the hypothesis that black is beautiful. To some extent, also, it is as aghast as the Age of Wright at the chamber of horrors which the original ghetto has now turned out to be. But it has rewritten the prescriptive portion of its script. Whether or not its ghetto is as nasty as some novelistic Negro ghettos have been, this ghetto is a citadel to be defended, not a disaster to be abandoned. It is in the role, then, of the ultimate in race patroits, the fighter to the bitter end, that the black narrator-protagonist of John A. Williams' *The Man Who Cried I Am* relays back across the Atlantic to a black separatist in America the contents of King Alfred, the contingency plan of the Government of the United States for the elimination, if need be, of all the blacks within its borders. "elimination" here, it should be carefully observed, having all the Nazi-atrocity connotations of Belsen, Buchenwald and Dachau. It is in keeping, moreover, with a world so dichotomized that not only this narrator-protagonist and the black separatist to whom he talks, but also the hitherto unsuspecting white-looking black collaborator, a tool for espionage of the whites, who stumbles on a transcription of the relay, should all be destroyed by the lily-white technicians of the CIA, or some organization like it. For the narrator-protagonist's death and that of the black leader to whom he has communicated King Alfred, as well as, very especially, that of the black collaborator, do all but illustrate one sound conclusion:

the futility of trying to do business with the white man, the implacability of color caste, and the stern necessity for all blacks to realize how, only with their own kind, can they find trust and brotherhood, beauty and life, love, honor, and respect, and peace—the peace that whites will allow only to non-whites who servilely submit to white supremacy.

A theme with four variations is what the ghetto of the Negro novel may well have been over the last seventy years. This theme with its four variations may well represent also, with fair precision, the states of the Negro mind over that same period. Does anything other than a basic aversion to color caste underlie these variations and, if it does, is it present both in the ghetto of the novels and in the mind of the Negro people, whom obviously the ghetto and all Negro literature purport, and hope, to represent? I think it does. I think it is, and let me now, in closing, and in attempting to justify what I think, attempt also to speak, in my own person, as plainly and as simply as I can.

I believe all the variations on the basic theme in the ghetto of the Negro novel speak with a common voice whose modulations of any kind are more apparent than real. I believe all these variations demonstrate to a reader both a constantly more comprehensive awareness on the part of Negroes in America of the true nature of American color caste and a constantly increasing willingness on their part to accept the proposition that Negroes, if they wish to live in America at all, can reconcile themselves to no compromise with color caste, for, in color caste, there is, ultimately, no compromise with Negroes. The indispensable requirement of color caste is, of course, precisely what the words imply. All the members of the caste must be kept within the caste. Then, as those without, and, presumably, always above, the caste must agree, all the members of the caste may always be dealt with as if they were all made from one mould. If such a disposition seems a travesty upon democracy, it is. But it is also a perversion of any genuine belief in the value of humanity. Black

separatism at the moment is the modish variation of the Negro novelist's black ghetto. I do not believe in black separatism any more than I believe in color caste. Nor do I believe that either represents a final phase of black-and-white relations in America. On the other hand we can learn, I do believe, from the progression of mutation in the variations on the theme of the ghetto in the Negro novel. And what I think we learn is how much for whites color caste is an expensive luxury. If they must have it, I suppose they must. But surely the more they have of it, the less they may ever have of anything really worth the trouble of continuing to exist in a world where the only value without price is the value of humanity.

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The Concept of Standard English

Albert H. Marckwardt

ALBERT H. MARCKWARDT, a leading authority on the history and structure of the English language, joined the Princeton University faculty in 1963 after 35 years on the faculty of the University of Michigan. As Paton Foundation Professor of Ancient and Modern Literature at Princeton, Marckwardt also teaches graduate courses in American dialects and general linguistics. A native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, he received his A.B., A.M., and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Michigan. Dr. Marckwardt's professional activities include the directorship of the 1966 Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English at Dartmouth College. A recipient of NCTE's 1970 David H. Russell Award for Distinguished Research in the Teaching of English and the 1961 Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award at the University of Michigan, he has been president of the Linguistic Society of America and the American Dialect Society. He has held Fulbright lectureships at the Universities of Vienna and Gras, Austria, and has served as State Department consultant on teaching English in Colombia, Panama, Italy, and Eastern Europe. A frequent contributor to professional journals, he is the author of *American English* and *Linguistics and the Teaching of English* and editor of *Language and Language Learning* and *Linguistics in School Programs*. His extensive work for NCTE includes its presidency in 1967 and, currently, chairmanship of the Committee on the Structure of the Council.

Albert H. Marckwardt

We have been talking about standard English for sixty years or more, but there is much disheartening evidence to show that the impact has been slight at best. When those who concoct the Winston cigarette advertisements can succeed in making a mountain out of what is in essence a grammatical molehill, and then dismissing not only it but an entire concern with language as a triviality, there is something unsound and uninformed about the public attitude toward language—to say nothing of its taste. When the superintendent of public instruction of the most populous state in the union—now fortunately retired by the electorate—can insist, "I say that there is only one way to write correct English, only one way to pronounce English words properly, only one way to punctuate sentences right, and only one way to conjugate verbs, compare adjectives, and identify parts of speech," it is again evident that the notion of a linguistic standard reflected here is rudimentary and ill-founded. Standard English is something we need to continue talking about, especially those of us who are going to have to deal with it in the schools.

Let us begin with the recognition that language is a form of social behavior. True enough, it has its individual side as well, but we cannot avoid recognizing language as the medium which makes possible the cooperation of human beings in a society. It is the very fabric of the social garment, so to speak.

Fundamental though language is to any human society, it is but one of many forms of behavior operative in a social order and shares certain qualities common to all of them. Mankind has always attempted to formulate customs and habits into a fixed system. The norms thus established become so much a part of the unconsciously accepted set of values of a society that one assumes that they are universally accepted and shared. Conformity tends to be the rule: violation incurs social penalties. This is what occurs with respect to all our social customs, our dress, our daily manners, our morals, and indeed our language. They are all characterized by more or less regularized systems of conduct, each

of these with its own particular history.

As far as I know, there has been little study of the way in which various forms or patterns of non-linguistic behavior acquire the prestige which makes for their acceptance as a norm or standard for the entire culture, or even for a socially or geographically delimited portion of it. Certainly environmental factors play a part. One may readily guess that it was the altitude of Mexico City which originally determined the early afternoon as the time for the principal meal. Like Macbeth, dinner at eight would murder sleep. It seems evident that in all societies certain approved conventions prevail out of pure tradition long after the necessity or reason for them has passed: witness the vents in the rear of men's jackets and the buttons on their sleeves. Consequently, there is no reason to suppose that either the influence of environment or that of tradition can be dismissed from our thinking when we come to deal with language.

Let us now turn specifically to language matters, but, looking beyond the boundaries of the English speech community, consider the Western European languages as a whole. In no Western European country did a vernacular language have more than a limited sphere of usefulness during the Middle Ages. The language of the church was Latin. Learned works, both scientific and philosophical, were written in Latin. The language of diplomacy and government was Latin. By the fifteenth century, however, the Church was being challenged by the Reformation, and an important point at issue was the availability of the Bible in the various native tongues. Learning had shifted from the monasteries to the universities, with some of the lectures at least being delivered in the native language. The breakdown of feudalism and the emergence of national states as a replacement for the strangely mixed patchwork of feudal holdings was perhaps the most decisive force in giving a new importance to national language as well as to other manifestations of a national culture.

In each of these countries there had been a period when a

number of regional dialects, all thriving and flourishing, had been in competition with one another. France had its *langue d'oc* and its *langue d'oil*. In Italy there were the dialects of Rome, of Naples, of Venice, of Florence. In Spain the dialects of Castile and Leon were in competition with those of Galicia, Aragon, and Andalucia. In the Netherlands, the speech of the inland manufacturing towns rivalled that of the coastal shipping centers. In England there had been one school of writers who employed the East Midland dialect, a group of lyric poets who used the speech of the West Midland counties, and some composers of romances who wrote in the dialect of the North.

But in each country, the beginning of the fifteenth century saw the emergence of one regional dialect as the standard or generally accepted norm. In Italy it was the speech of Florence, in Spain that of Castile—the usage of Toledo in particular—in France the language of the Ile de France, the area surrounding Paris. The dialect of London became the standard in England. It requires little inspired detection to discover the reason for each of these developments; they are obvious. In every instance the dialect which emerged as the basis for the standard was that which was politically, economically, socially, and culturally dominant in the nation or the total language community.

Nor should we be led to overemphasize the cultural factor, narrowly speaking, in these developments. It is true that Dante wrote in Tuscan Italian, but Florence under the Medici was also a center of economic power and political influence. The same observation must be made of England, where during the turbulent years of Norman domination, the power base had shifted from Winchester to London. Indeed, we cannot escape the conclusion that the development of a national standard language, whether in England, France, or elsewhere, was nothing more than the reflection of an already existing situation, a selection of one of several possibilities on the basis of social utility.

Social utility comes into play in another way as well. In a

recent treatment of this matter, John H. Fisher has asserted that the model for the emergent standard was not, despite the expression that rolls off the lips so easily, the king's English. In the first place, he points out that the phrase "suggests an exclusive, hereditary principle which is anathema to our society. Furthermore," he continues, "the phrase is inaccurate. The kings of England have seldom been models of linguistic propriety. The English we teach began as lawyer's English. 'Standard English' is really 'administrative' English. It emerged in Chancery and the courts and government offices of Westminster at the end of the 14th century as a *written* language fashioned for administration. Some of the clerks in the civil service, such as Chaucer, Gower, and Hoccleve, used this administrative English for poetry in their off hours, and so administrative English very early became literary English. In the 15th century this administrative English was married to the printing press (again beginning in Westminster with Caxton) and begot *mass communication*. Caxton, his patrons in government, and the Tudor pamphleteers who followed them early learned that administrative English extended through the technological resources of the printing press could command masses." [1] As far as Chaucer is concerned, it is true that the excellence of his work lent prestige to an already existing standard; the point to recognize is that he did not make it the standard.

Thus far the emergence of a linguistic standard for England was essentially an unconscious process, a recognition or reflection of an existing social situation. But for the next five centuries or just a little less (which brings us into the nineteenth), London was to maintain its dominance over the English language community. The speech of the ruling classes there came to serve not only as a standard but a model as well, and it is important to differentiate the two. Whereas the characterization of one form of the language as a standard is simply a statement of fact, when we speak of a model we are saying in effect that the standard has acquired such prestige that it is regarded as essential to pro-

fessional performance and to social and economic advancement.

As one can readily imagine, a dialect usually achieves the status of a standard before it becomes accepted as a model, and when it does, we move from the realm of unconscious acceptance to that of conscious prescription. This did not occur overnight, of course. Nevertheless, by the end of the sixteenth century, we find recommended as a model for would-be poets, "The usual speech of the Court and that of London and the shires lying about London within sixty miles, and not much more." [2] This statement is as interesting for what it excludes as for what it includes. Only the counties of Middlesex, Surrey, and Hertford fall wholly within the circle, and it is significant to find the first two mentioned by Puttenham, when he goes on to say that, "in every shire of England there be gentlemen and others that speak, but specially write as good Southern as we of Middlesex or Surrey do, but not the common people of every shire." [3] To go back to our circle, Oxford, Canterbury, and Cambridge were all outside; Reading, just on the line.

Yet we must not be misled into thinking that Puttenham's statement implied an absolute uniformity within the sixty-mile radius, either at the time he made it or over a period of years. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the language of London underwent considerable change, due in part to some extensive shifts in population, principally a movement into the capital from the northern counties. For one thing, Yorkshire had become a center of the wool industry, and as a consequence, well-to-do North Countrymen moved to London and set themselves up as wool merchants. One result of this was to establish the plural pronouns *their* and *them* as standard forms in place of earlier *her* and *hem*. Another was to fix upon the *-s* inflection for the third person singular, present indicative of verbs; *he gives, he keeps* instead of *he giveth, he keepeth*. A third was the acceptance of *are* as the present indicative plural form of the verb *to be*, replacing the earlier *ben*. We learn from this that a standard

language is not permanently fixed, but that it will change in time, usually in response to social pressures of one kind or another.

Nor is any standard language likely to be so firmly fixed as to deny some choice to the individual speaker over a fairly wide range of linguistic usage. The Londoner, living during the reign of the first Elizabeth, had certain choices not available to his twentieth-century counterpart in the time of Elizabeth II. There were two possible forms of the reflexive pronoun at his disposal. The suffix *-ly* might or might not be appended to many adverbs which now have a fixed form. Verbal interrogation and negation could be indicated by either of two types of construction. A choice of personal pronoun in the second person singular enabled him to convey attitudes and emotions which must be signaled in other ways today. The ordering of adverbial elements in a clause was by no means so restricted, nor did the multiple negative construction suffer the opprobrium which attaches to it today. I hasten to point out, of course, that the contemporary speaker has alternatives which did not exist at that time. The significant conclusion to be drawn is that at no point, in the development of English, was the linguistic standard as absolute and monolithic as is often assumed.

During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were pronounced changes in the social structure in England, which again affected the position of the language standard and the way in which it operated. Principally, the power base shifted to add the upper middle class to the already existing establishment. That is to say, mercantilism became as important a source of wealth and influence as land and agriculture, which had hitherto been the principal sources. The result of this shift, continuing to the present day, has been cogently expressed by Nancy Mitford: "There is in England no aristocratic class that forms a caste. We have about 950 peers, not all of whom, incidentally, sit in the House of Lords . . . Most of the peers share the education, usage, and point of view of a vast upper middle class, but the upper middle

class does not, in its turn, merge imperceptibly into the middle class. There is a very definite border line, easily recognizable by hundreds of small but significant landmarks."[4] Just what this so-called vastness amounts to is difficult to say. When Geoffrey Gorer conducted a sociological survey of England some fifteen years ago, only two percent of his sample rated themselves as upper middle class. He conceded that this was probably too small to fit the facts.[5] But even if the figure were extended to five percent, we would then have only a total of some two million and a half to whom the designation might properly be applied, scarcely an overwhelming number who would thus qualify as speakers of the standard language.

But we must return to the point in time when this group first blossomed in its newly acquired dominance. A freshly emerging controlling class is likely to be culturally insecure. The *nouveau riche* merchant, faced with an invitation to one of the country's old and established families, felt a real need to be told the right way to act, to feel, and to speak. He had little faith that his instinct would carry him through a socially trying situation. He wanted guidance, and he wanted it to be as specific as possible. This esteem for rules and regularity during the eighteenth century may, as Margaret Schlauch has remarked, be recognized in the plastic arts, in fashions in clothes, in literary styles, and "less obviously but still with some clarity" in language and attitudes toward language.[6]

As we all know, demand begets supply, and with respect to language, the response was almost immediately forthcoming. It took the guise of a rigidly authoritarian attitude toward language and language usage which often amounted to a denial or negation of the usage of the best writers and speakers, which in turn constituted a disregard of the very forces which had operated and which usually do operate to create and maintain a standard.

We have been aware of this for at least forty years; I need not dwell on it at any great length. The following brief quota-

tion from Robert Lowth's *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) will suffice: "But let us consider, how, and in what extent, we are to understand this charge brought against the English Language [that our language offends against every part of grammar] . . . Does it mean, that the English Language as it is spoken by the politest part of the nation, and as it stands in the writings of our most approved authors oftentimes offends against every part of grammar? Thus far, I am afraid, the charge is true."[7] Typical catalogues of "the best authors" charged with these improprieties by Lowth and his contemporaries included such names as Addison, Swift, and Pope.

Many of the conventions now accepted and regarded as preferable, if not elegant, were first formulated at this time. Among these are the distinction between *lie* and *lay*, the preference for *different from*, and for *would rather* in place of *had rather*. The rules discriminating *shall* and *will* had a longer period of development, but came into full flower with the grammar by William Ward in 1765.[8]

At this point English enters upon a new phase, namely that of a world language. By 1800 English-speaking settlers had carried the language to America, including the West Indies as well as the mainland, and to Australia. It was becoming the language of governmental administration in India. The nineteenth century saw the penetration of South Africa by speakers of English, and again its extension as the language of government to East Africa, to Burma, to British Honduras and Guiana, as well as to other isolated spots throughout the world. These were the years when the sun set on neither the British flag of empire nor the English language. The empire has dwindled, but not the latter. As the other English-speaking nations grew in power and influence, the position of the language became firmly entrenched. Today, only one other language, Chinese, surpasses English with respect to the total number of speakers, but it is confined to a single continent.

This territorial extension resulted in a marked gain in the

number of speakers. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English had ranked fifth among the European languages as to the numbers who spoke it. In 1750 English was still in fifth place with some nine or ten million speakers. By 1850, it had forged ahead of all the others, as the result, presumably, of the addition of some 23,000,000 persons in the United States for whom it was a first or native language. By 1970 the speakers of English in the United States alone outnumbered those in the home country by a ratio of four to one.

The spread of the language to countries with a physical environment very different from that of England, with their own institutions and folkways, required a considerable amount of adjustment, and each new country made those which the situation demanded. This resulted in even less uniformity within the language than it had to begin with. In the United States especially, the language was affected by the quite different class structure which was developing. Socially, it was not nearly so stratified as England. There was little or no upper class, none in fact with respect to a hereditary position in it. Nor was there the sharp line of demarcation between the upper middle class and the middle class that Miss Mitford has commented on in Britain. Society was a continuum rather than a series of discrete layers, one which permitted as much mobility up and down the social scale as there was movement across the country into the vast open spaces.

As in eighteenth century England, the social mobility made for insecurity, and the demand for guidance on specific points of usage continued. The most popular school grammar in the United States was Lindley Murray's *Grammar of the English Language Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners*. Written in 1795, it reflected the authoritarian tradition characteristic of the eighteenth century English grammarians. Its popularity was immense. It went through some two hundred editions and sold more than two million copies. Murray, trained as a lawyer and successful as a business man, had no philological preparation, nor did most of

his competitors for the elementary school market.

Books on language written for the general public in the United States were just as rigidly prescriptive as the elementary school grammars, and like them were products of the untrained amateur. L.P. Meredith, the author of *Every Day Errors of Speech* (1879), derived his credentials from the degrees of Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Dental Science: he was also the author of a possibly more helpful treatise on *The Teeth and How to Save Them.* The immediate post-Civil War period witnessed the rise of a number of authoritarian language arbiters. One of the most popular of these was Richard Grant White, whose book *Words and Their Uses* first appeared in 1870 and continued to be published well into the twentieth century. Highly urbane and polished, White was the author of musical criticism, studies of Shakespeare, and political satire. He has been described as snobbish, witty, influential, and often unsound. Some idea of the temper of his linguistic judgments may be gained from his characterization of the words *presidential, tangential,* and *exponential* as "a trinity of monsters which, although they have not been lovely in their lives, should yet in their death not be divided." [9]

What I have tried to present thus far is a rapid sketch of the social factors which account for the emergence of standard English, the nature of the demand for a standard, and the veneration which it commands—attitudes which extend to the bulk of the English teaching profession as well as the general public. These matters of demand and attitude cannot be dismissed out of hand. They remain as salient factors with respect to the English language and the way in which it is taught in the schools. But the public concept of the standard may be one thing; the way in which a linguistic standard and a model actually operate can be quite another. We must next turn our attention to the facts in the case.

First of all, one must ask how the current standard is defined or determined. For this there is no source other than actual

usage. The Horatian dictum that use is the sole arbiter and norm of speech has been accepted by everyone from his time to the present, with the sole exception of eighteenth century England, which has already been mentioned. But even so, Horace's statement really begs the question. It fails to tell us whose usage.

This question can be answered only in terms of what we know about the development of standard forms in languages generally, and in English in particular. It brings us back to the origin of standard English, which was administrative English, as John Fisher characterized it, or as Charles C. Fries said on many occasions, the language used by those who are carrying on the affairs of the English speaking world. It is language with social utility in the broadest sense, and as we have already seen, when the social base of the power structure shifted, the standard changed along with it.

Since the late fourteenth century, the time at which London English became the prestige dialect, the composition of the controlling group has changed considerably, especially in the United States over the past century and a half. People shift status more easily and more rapidly than heretofore, and the nature of what we mistakenly equate with the British establishment has widened. We must recall that even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there was nothing like total uniformity in the standard language. There is even less at the present time. As Edward Sapir once commented, "The modern problem [of establishing a standard] is more complex than the classical or the mediaeval problem, because the modern mind insists on having the process of standardization take the form of a democratic rather than an aristocratic process." [10] It is only realistic, therefore, to recognize that standard English today will embrace a broad range of acceptability. There will inevitably be numerous alternative and equally acceptable expressions.

The demographic facts argue for this same conclusion, for this same broadening of our vision. Shakespeare's London, the

focal point of our sixteenth century standard, had approximately 250,000 inhabitants, consisting of about five percent of a total English-speaking population of some five million. Today, the United States alone has forty times five million, to say nothing of another seventy-five to one hundred million speakers scattered about four continents of the globe, with the language developing, to some degree at least, in its own fashion in some six or seven countries. Under such circumstances a considerable degree of variation is absolutely unavoidable. There is not the time to examine the differences in the emergent standard in all of these countries, but it will be enlightening, I believe, to compare the situation as it exists in England and the United States today.

This will take us back, first of all, to the distinction drawn earlier in this discussion between a standard and a model. With respect to pronunciation, England has a single dialect—or accent, as they call it—which serves as both a standard and a model. It is often referred to as RP, that is to say Received Pronunciation. It is ruling class or establishment speech, which became fixed as a model through the conformist influence of the public schools (*private schools*, in American terminology) of the nineteenth century. Even today, as A.C. Gimson explains, "The English are very sensitive to variations in the pronunciation of their language. The 'wrong accent' may still be an impediment to social intercourse or to advancement or to entry in certain professions. Such extreme sensitivity is apparently not paralleled in any other country or even in other parts of the English-speaking world." [11] An instance of this sensitivity is reported by Geoffrey Gorer in his *Exploring English Character:* "A young married woman from St. Albans describes herself as: 'just ordinary working class; I can look frightfully "bung ho!" but must keep my mouth closed or else.' " [12] Gimson concedes that with the recent spread of education, situations can arise in which an educated man may not belong to the upper classes and his speech may retain its regional characteristics; nevertheless, those eager for social advancement feel

obliged to modify their accent in the direction of the social standard.

To some extent, at least, this turns out to be a futile gesture, so Alan S.C. Ross reports. According to him, "In England today—just as much as in the England of many years ago—the question 'Can a non-U[pper class] speaker become a U speaker?' is one noticeably of paramount importance for many Englishmen (and for some of their wives). The answer is that an adult can never attain complete success. . . . Under these circumstances, efforts to change voice are surely better abandoned." [13]

A quite different situation prevails in the United States. It is only necessary to think of the wide range of variation displayed by the pronunciation of the current president and his two predecessors, Messrs. Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, all with college degrees, all obviously in a position of power and prestige, each with a speech pattern characteristic of millions. No one of these speech types could be condemned out of hand as nonstandard. To put it in another way, for every detractor of Mr. Johnson's dialect, a thousand Texans would roar their approval of his and attach an equal amount of opprobrium to the accent of the other two. In direct contrast to this, it is reported that Harold Wilson was the first prime minister of the United Kingdom, except for Ramsay McDonald, who was not a speaker of Received Pronunciation.

The British conviction that the socially approved model cannot be acquired beyond the onset of adolescence would be completely unacceptable in the United States. It simply runs counter to our national ethos and egalitarianism, influenced as they are by Rousseau on the one hand, and Horatio Alger on the other.

In matters of grammatical form, however, the British are often more permissive than our practice and far more latitudinarian than our precept. Many Americans feel a sense of guilt about using *have got* to indicate possession, yet one need only recall the lines from *My Fair Lady* at the point where Eliza finally perfects her rendition of "the rain in Spain": "By George she's

got it: I think she's got it." spoken by an expert in the English language, of all things.[14] The opening sentence of a recent article in the *Times Literary Supplement* discussing the Leipzig Book Fair reads, "But who does the Fair serve." For this to have appeared in the American counterpart of the *TLS* would require something of a stretch of the imagination. The matter was summed up very cogently by Katherine Whitehorn a few years ago when she wrote, "In America, where it is grammar, not accent, that places you, anyone can learn the grammar."[15] Certainly the first half of the statement is an accurate observation, irrespective of whether or not one agrees wholly with the conclusion.

In this same connection it should be observed that few Americans have any measurable degree of confidence in their ability to speak and write the language. Apologies for grammatical imperfection are endemic, extending even to those with a first-class private school and Ivy League university education. Whether the acknowledgments of such shortcomings are sincere or a mere formality is beside the point. The fact that they are said at all is indicative of a somewhat unwholesome state of mind linguistically speaking, and at the same time reinforces Miss Whitehorn's observation about the emphasis upon grammar in the American concept of the standard language.

With respect to vocabulary there are relatively few lexical items in the United States where a word itself rather than the way of life it represents would place an individual in the class structure. *Tux* for a dinner jacket might be one; *supper* rather than *dinner* for the regular evening meal could be another, but this is partly conditioned by the nature of the meal itself, and it appears to exist to a degree in England as well.

There are many more lexical class markers in England. Alan S.C. Ross, whose article, "U and Non-U, An Essay in Sociological Linguistics," appeared in Nancy Mitford's collection, *Noblesse Oblige*, lists at least three dozen.[16] One of these is *table napkin*, upper class, as opposed to *serviette*, non-upper, which according

to Ross is perhaps the best known of all the linguistic class indicators of English. The history of this development is of some interest. *Table napkin* is first cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1564 and has been in continuous use from that time on. Let me point out in passing that the compound form is absolutely essential here, since the unmodified term *napkin* means "diaper" in British English.

Serviette first appears in 1489, but the *Oxford English Dictionary* comments that the older use of the term was exclusively Scotch. It eventually shifted its stress to the first syllable and levelled the original diphthong of the second to a single neutralized vowel. In the nineteenth century it was reintroduced with the French spelling, at first only as a foreign term. The Oxford editor, writing fairly early in the present century, commented, "It may now be regarded as naturalized, but latterly has come to be considered vulgar." This judgment was reinforced by the very latest citation, dated 1906 and taken from a letter of one H. Bland to his daughter: "I think . . . she was the sort who would call a table napkin a serviette."

There is some question as to whether the stigma still remains. Some of my English friends do not consider it as infallible a class marker as Ross seems to have done. Others say it is in approved use for small paper cocktail napkins but not for the larger linen variety used with the dinner service. A definitive answer is very likely not to be had, but the example is valuable as evidence that lexical class markers do exist, and that each one has its individual history.

I shall take some time to examine just one more instance of a lexical class marker in England, again quoting Ross to the effect that "at cards, *jack* is non-U against U *knave*, save in *jackpot* at poker." [17] This judgment is fortified by a quotation from Dickens' *Great Expectations*, " 'He calls the knaves, Jacks, this boy!' said Estella with disdain." Again a glance at the history of the two terms is enlightening. *Knave* came into the language, or at least

is first recorded in the eleventh century: its use as a term in cards dates from 1568, and it has been used continuously in England ever since then. *Jack*, as a term for a playing card, was used originally only for the knave of trumps and in only one card game, that called *all fours*. The earliest citation for it is 1674. The *Oxford English Dictionary* citations suggest that the game itself was played chiefly by working men. Its extension to other games and to suits other than trump must therefore have seemed an ignorant and unwarranted extension which undoubtedly explains the attitude revealed in the quotation from *Great Expectations*. It is first recorded in the United States in 1845, a time when its class status in England had already been established.

The virtue of these British-American comparisons lies not only in their eloquent testimony that each individual item within the standard has its own history, but also in the demonstration that there is a considerable variation in the linguistic value systems of England and America, not to mention all of the other countries in which English is used natively, and that our judgments on these matters can be exercised only in the light of an accurate and comprehensive record of actual usage. Such an accurate and comprehensive record is not always easy to come by, however: we run into several problems in connection with it, and particularly in attempting to reconcile usage itself with what many of the language textbooks and even the dictionaries say about it.

There are instances, for example, when the rule or proscription runs counter to the actual facts. An instance of this is the widespread disapproval of the verb *finalize*. Its inclusion without a restrictive label in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1961), supported by citations of its use by President Eisenhower, Robertson Davies, and *Newsweek*, created a tempest in a teapot. The *New York Times* was especially incensed, objecting not only to its inclusion in the dictionary but to a subsequent use of it by President Kennedy in a news conference.[18] In reply, Dr. Philip B. Gove, the editor of Webster III, pointed

out that the word had turned up "all over the English-speaking world, from the Nineteen Twenties through the Nineteen Fifties in highly respectable places like *Current History, Journal of Near Eastern Studies, Americana Annual,* the *New Republic,* and the *Times* itself."[19] The *Random House Dictionary* in a usage note recognized the forty-year life of the word in an attempt to scotch the myth that it was a quite recent bureaucratic coinage. The *American Heritage Dictionary,* considerably more to the right lexicographically speaking, mentioned the bureaucratic association which the word has for some but omitted the record of it usage. In addition, it reported that ninety percent of the members of its Usage Panel considered the word unacceptable.

Although the attitude toward a word or construction is without question part of the total record of its use, it is not likely that the disapproval of the *American Heritage* panel will have any pronounced effect, although it is unquestionably a comfort to many to see this recorded in cold print. Working against its extinction is the fact of its forty years of use in reputable sources, and the even more powerful circumstances that the addition of the suffix *-ize* to adjectives is not only widespread in English (witness *brutalize, fertilize, solemnize, sterilize, spiritualize*) but one of long standing, going back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. I hasten to say, I have no vested interest in the word; I don't believe I have ever used it except to quote it in contexts like these, but it does furnish an illustration where fact and opinion are considerably at variance. There are many of them.

Another kind of problem occurs when the textbook comments make an insufficient distinction between the usage of spoken and that of written English. An instance of this is to be found in the use of *like* for *as* as a subordinating conjunction, a matter one hesitates to bring up because of the cumulative silliness of the Winston advertising campaign. Again it is not at all a recent development: it originated as early as 1580, as an ellipsis of *like as*. The most careful summary of its use appears in

Margaret M. Bryant's *Current American Usage*. She reported: "*Like* as a conjunction rarely appears in formal written English, but occurs in spoken English and in conversational written English. *As* is the preferred conjunction in formal English, with *as if* and *as though* fairly common variants." [20] This conclusion is based in part upon one study which reported *like* as a substitution for *as* two and one-half times as often in spoken English as in written, and upon another which reported a 92 percent incidence of *as*, compared with 8 percent with *like* in contemporary fiction, newspapers, and periodicals. Much more could be said about the reasons for its greater frequency in the spoken language, but the important point to recognize is that virtually every language differs with respect to written and spoken, formal and informal usage, and any recognition of a standard cannot fail to take this into account.

There are times as well when a so-called rule, that is to say, an attempt at an accurate account of language usage is stated in awkward, or even worse, in logically indefensible terms. This is true, for example, of the conventional rules for the use of *shall* and *will*, according to which *shall* in the first, *will* in the second and third persons, is supposed to be used to indicate simple futurity, and *will* in the first person, *shall* in the second and third, express "a promise, volition, command or threat." The difficulty here arises from the creation of a false dichotomy. The two classes are not mutually exclusive. Futurity is a matter of time; promise, volition, command, and threat are aspects of verbal modality. A statement that something is to occur in the future surely carries a hint of promise, determination, or volition. Most statements of intent refer to actions which are to occur in the future. It is unquestionably true that there is a kind of patterning in the distribution of these auxiliaries, but the rule as it is conventionally stated does not adequately describe it, nor is usage at all the same over the vast expanses of the English-speaking world.

There is a final problem which arises especially in the United

States. It may best be illustrated by an excerpt from a letter which I received not long ago, from a corporation executive who had been present at a lecture which I had given two or three weeks earlier. He wrote as follows, "I appreciate your sharing your expertise with us in the February 13 and 14 conference. I wish to propagate these concepts among our management personnel. To help me reinforce my memory, I would appreciate receiving a copy of your presentation."

There is nothing amiss with the grammar or the structure in what he wrote, but the style is heavy, cliché-ridden, bureaucratese at its very worst, what our English friends often refer to as "the pretentious illiteracy of the Americans." It does pose a problem of the standard language at a higher level, one of taste and style, yet these are real issues and cannot easily be shrugged off.

Any consideration of the standard language must reckon with the outlook for the future. This is especially important for us as teachers. We are told at times that the pluralistic society we are developing in this country will reject the middle or upper-middle class norms and that there is no point in insisting upon them in the schools. Those who have urged the establishment of a functional bi-dialectalism as part of the school language program have been charged with hypocrisy and sometimes worse.

The answer to this, it seems to me, is that the pluralistic aspect of our society is not at all new. It has been with us for some time, and the linguistic standard as it has developed in this country has reflected the pluralism to a degree and will continue to do so. As I have tried to demonstrate, the standard has never been rigidly monolithic. Admittedly, there is somewhat more open opposition to the standard as a standard than there has been before, especially on the part of those sympathetic to the black and other ethnic minorities. The women's liberation forces are even finding a sex bias in the language.

In general, however, these attacks have been uninformed and naive. Some of them restate positions which any competent stu-

dent of the language already holds. This is especially true of those who insist that all dialects possess equal value and have an equal right to their existence as media of communication. As far as I know, no linguist has ever called this into question, but no linguist in his right mind could possibly say that they all have equal prestige, and there is little point in insisting upon the self-deception that they do.

Other critics have searched the thesaurus and have found to their horror that the word *black* has a preponderance of unfavorable connotations, whereas the word *white* is used more often in a favorable sense. This is a fact, but there is little point in blinking it, or in attempting to change it overnight. It is scarcely possible to bleach Grendel's mere to an ash blond color. But the Black Prince does remain a heroic figure, and white-livered is a term for a coward. With the current sensitivity about color, it is fair to assume that euphemisms for those words with an unfavorable atmosphere will develop in the course of time, but history clearly disproves that language can be changed or regulated by fiat. Dictators have attempted it from time to time, with no lasting effect.

But it is far from my intention to end this discussion on a negative note. Standard English, as I have attempted to demonstrate, can be understood only in the perspective of its long development and the forces which shaped it. We must never overlook the fact that there is now, and always has been, more latitude within the standard than the authoritarian mind, or even the average person, was prepared to think. It is equally evident that social utility was the dominant force which shaped the standard at the outset, and that the language has continued to be responsive to the demands of a constantly changing social situation. It is quite within keeping of this concept of its flexibility that it should have operated differently in England and the United States, especially with respect to the features of the language which serve as a model.

To the extent that these considerations about the standard language enter into the school program, and there seems to be every reason for them to do so, a sweeping change of attitude on the part of teachers, supervisors, administrators, and parents is urgently needed. In particular we must rid ourselves of the unspoken assumption that a linguistic standard is a form of etiquette, and that school grammar is its Emily Post. This is too narrow and too simple a view of the matter. The vast majority of the rules of etiquette are nonfunctional and in general defer to what Thorstein Veblen once called the law of conspicuous waste. A view of language and teaching procedures based on such a concept will lead only to more of the failures, the anxieties, the faulty and often ridiculous hyper-corrections, and the compensatory pretentiousness that we have already experienced.

For this I would substitute the concept of language as patterned, culturally determined behavior, subject of course to the human tendency to establish prestige-approved norms, but norms which have a latitude and do permit of variation, as most social norms do, and moreover, norms which will reflect the changing nature of the society in which the behavior occurs. I am supremely confident that when not only teachers but all speakers of English in the United States understand these concepts and proceed upon them as a basis, there will be fewer frustrations and greater linguistic capability and achievement.

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Rhetoric: How Do You Carve an Elephant?

Robert M. Gorrell

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You carve an elephant, of course, by taking a block of wood and cutting away everything that isn't an elephant. You write a novel by taking an unabridged dictionary and cutting out everything that isn't a novel. I'm not very handy with a pocket knife: I can imagine myself taking a block of wood and ending with a toothpick instead of an elephant. Roy Campbell ends his poem "On Some South African Novelists":

> You praise the firm restraint with which they write—
> material deleted due to copyright restrictions
> But where's the bloody horse? [1]

In Africa or India Pegasus might have been an elephant.

I suspect that one cannot write solely by amputation, however judicious. But much teaching of writing seems to assume that one can. It focuses on excision—of dangling modifiers and sentence fragments, of initial *buts* and final prepositions, of slang and jargon and cliché, of *likes* for *a*ses and *lays* where *lies* should be. Although I recognize therapeutic virtues of the red pencil, and although I cringe as painfully as anyone at *between my wife and I*, I suggest that the primarily negative approach produces few wooden elephants and fewer good essays.

The tendency of instruction in writing to become mainly the enforcement of prohibitions is understandable. It grows partly from admirable zeal. English teachers are notoriously conscientious, and proscriptive rules provide something tangible to teach, something comparable to formulas in mathematics or dates in history. The tendency grows also from a pedagogical fallacy—that direct attack educates—students are unpatriotic so we establish a course in patriotism; students make mistakes in writing, so we go after the mistakes. The method lends itself readily to framing behavioral objectives. But it confuses education with indoctrination.

I am aware that by this time attacking rules with red pen-

cils is flogging a dead horse—or a dead elephant. Most of us these days are ready enough to deny that negative drills and corrections should dominate the intellectual life of the teacher of writing. But we have not filled the vacuum left by our condemnation.

One solution is to fill the vacuum with whatever happens to be at hand. We give up sentence diagramming and drills on the evils of dangling modifiers—which constituted the old way of not teaching writing—and we substitute discussions of how to choose a profession or how to reduce pollution in Lake Erie, or we turn to producing films or collages or scrapbooks—which constitutes a new, and perhaps more relevant, way of not teaching writing. This procedure seems to me just surrender. I doubt that anyone can carve an elephant by speculating about his social life.

Another solution is to leave the vacuum. The way to carve an elephant is to give somebody a block of wood and a knife and get out of the way. There is much to be said for this solution. A first obligation of the teacher of writing, it seems to me, is to free the student from inhibitions and restrictions so that he can learn more and more about the possibilities of language as a means of self-expression. Our major obligation is not to equip a student with a set of particular competencies, directed toward what we assume to be the practical requirements of the world—how to produce a paragraph in a certain pattern, how to make an outline, how to talk politely on the telephone, how to write the kinds of papers that will be demanded in college, how to spell. These may all be desirable skills, but teaching them can be suffocating. Our purpose must be to help the student grow through language, play with language, use language to develop insights and to stretch the imagination. Discipline is meaningless unless there is something to discipline. Probably more harm is done by too much teaching than by too little.

But since we are teachers and are likely to try to earn our salaries one way or another, I want to suggest another alterna-

tive. I suggest that we can give up the old pattern of teaching composition as rules—mainly negative—or as drill on usage, but I suggest that the alternatives do not have to be either substituting another subject or staying out of the way. The alternative I suggest is that we teach understanding. This solution is so obvious that I may seem to have been building to an anticlimax. Understanding is the goal of all education. Perhaps the main hazard in considering it is that we all begin by agreeing—in general. But notice that teaching for understanding is widely different from what we tend to do in teaching composition—different from prescribing procedures and proposing formulas, different from enforcing prohibitions. When we consider the implications of teaching writing as understanding, the approach is not so obvious. It requires entanglement in the difficult questions of how we compose and how communication with language works. How *do* you carve an elephant? Do you start with the head or the tail? Do you carve by formula? Somehow all the wooden souvenir elephants exported from India look the same. Do you use a model? Should the surface be rough or smooth? Do you use a knife or a scalpel or an axe? Or does everybody have his own method?

We don't know all the answers, of course, but we need to exploit what we do know. And to begin with, I suggest that the focus of instruction in writing should be what I am calling rhetoric. I do not mean that in the fifth or ninth grade we start trying to lead students through Aristotle and Hugh Blair and Kenneth Burke—although probably worse things happen. I mean rather that rhetoric as a discipline provides the logical subject matter, the logical direction for instruction in composition. I am defining rhetoric as the art of making choices among available means of expression.

This definition does not restrict rhetoric as a neat discipline; it leaves rhetoric embracing almost everything under the sun. The second part of the definition, "available means of expres-

sion," establishes the pertinence of almost any study of language or its uses—grammar, semantics, logic, philology, examinations of communication media. The first part involves sociology, psychology, ethics, or aesthetics as relevant to the bases on which we make choices. The definition, however, does have two advantages. It provides a way of distinguishing rhetoric from other disciplines. Grammar, for example, is a study of the structure of a language, and its findings are obviously useful for rhetoric, but it is a different subject with a different purpose. Grammar may distinguish between the active and passive voices, may explain the passive sentence as a transform of the active, may formulate the rules whereby a passive sentence can be produced. Rhetoric, on the other hand, is concerned with whether to use an active or passive sentence in a particular context, is concerned with choice. The definition also provides a way of focusing the teaching of writing, of giving it some identity, of picking what should be emphasized.

The major implication of the definition is that rhetoric, as the art of selection, is primarily concerned with anticipating effects. The writer, in order to choose wisely, predicts results. Partly, of course, the prediction depends on the writer's purposes and the context of the writing. Is the elephant intended to amuse children or guard a temple? Is the block of wood hard or soft, large or small? Was the figure commissioned, or do you just like to carve elephants? But even with clear purposes, if we know what we want to do for whom, rhetorical choices present problems. How do we do what we want to do? What can we expect for different alternatives? What will the reactions be if we give the elephant wings or a peg leg, if we paint it pink? W.S. Gilbert drew elephants skating.

The writer, of course, makes most of his choices automatically. If we weighed each alternative for every word, we would doom ourselves to silence, or a long stutter. The choices are made, however; and the function of rhetoric, and of the teaching of

writing, is to help people make these choices wisely. At first glance, it seems that the obvious way to provide this help is to tell people what to do and what not to do—to provide rules and principles. This, of course, has been the major use of rhetoric as it has been adapted to pedagogy, although I think it is not what Aristotle or George Campbell intended. In the eighteenth century, and then with a vengeance in the nineteenth, teachers solidified and simplified rhetoric into principles. Some of these were the kinds of proscriptions and prescriptions I have lamented already; others were more sophisticated. But I think that we need to question the assumption that the function of rhetoric is to produce principles or concepts.

It is difficult to establish the validity of any generalization about writing that is precise enough to be useful. One way to establish validity would be to show that the principles "grow organically out of the biological nature of man," to use a psycholinguist's phrase, to show that they reflect human nature. Rhetoricians have long assumed that they were describing human behavior. George Campbell's purpose was to exhibit if not "a correct map . . . a tolerable sketch of the human mind."[2] He could not provide scientific evidence for even the tolerable accuracy of his sketch, but he did rely on the plausibility of his conclusions and on common sense for authority. Modern psycholinguists, exploiting advances in both linguistics and psychology, have worked toward more precise information about the relations between mind and language, but have not, I think, attempted to provide authenticated principles for behavior.

Induction provides another obvious means of producing principles about writing. We examine a reliable sample of prose, make a generalization from our findings, and turn the generalization into a principle for behavior. The final step, producing the principle, is the precarious one. Analysis of bodies of prose has been popular in recent years, partly as a method of testing some venerable principles, and has produced interesting generalizations. Most

of these have not been very practical if converted to advice. For example, it is easy enough to investigate the occurrence of topic sentences in paragraphs. I am confident that if we examine a substantial number of selections we can conclude that a considerable proportion of the paragraphs in modern prose begin with some kind of topic sentence. A student of mine in a study a couple of years ago found some 80 percent, although he had problems in identification. But what kind of rule does this sort of information support? Does it justify the principle common in textbooks—"Always begin a paragraph with a topic sentence"—or "usually begin . . ." or ". . . unless you have good reason for an exception"? Or we examine the ways of beginning sentences in modern prose and find that about 75 percent begin with the subject; only a fourth of the sentences have modifying constructions or something else preceding the subject.[3] This evidence certainly should be adequate to annihilate a precept that turns up frequently in the books—"Vary sentence openings; avoid beginning most sentences with the subject." But does it produce any more sensible counter rule? Is it helpful to say, "Begin 75 percent of your sentences with the subject"? Or to say, "Use verbal constructions sparingly as sentence openers"? A major difficulty with rules is that they are likely to be wrong, or partly wrong.

We have tended to reduce rhetoric to a series of principles, and the principles have proved hard to validate and not very useful anyway; but we are not therefore justified in dismissing rhetoric as useless. It is my contention, in fact, that rhetoric can supply the subject matter to fill the vacuum left when we remove the drill books and the rules. Rhetoric, viewed as a study of choice, directs the teaching of writing toward understanding, of both the means of expression and the problems of choosing among them.

There is nothing revolutionary about suggesting that we teach rhetoric or that we aim teaching toward understanding. I doubt that anyone questions the virtues of understanding. I think,

however, that what I am suggesting is more than a quibble, more than laboring the obvious. I hope I am suggesting the basis on which we can give up the approaches in teaching writing which have proved inadequate without in the process giving up teaching writing. To demonstrate that there is a distinction, I want to consider two specific applications.

I begin with the vexing question of usage. I think nobody any longer takes seriously the notion that there is something called pure English and that the English teacher's destiny on this planet is to protect it from desecration. I suppose also that most of us have lost any faith we ever had that right-wrong drills have much effect. I remember once privately challenging myself to influence at least one usage habit in a class, and I tried valiantly to eradicate confusion between *lie* and *lay* in one freshman section. Every day I managed somehow or other to devote five minutes to explaining or demonstrating or drilling on the difference. The business became a joke and then a ritual. The students got so that they could fill in the blanks in my sentences in the conventional ways. Then on the final examination I contrived, with a good deal of ingenuity as I remember, to work in a question that would require using the two verbs. And just as they had at the beginning of the semester, about half the class had the books laying on the bed.

I am not sure that anything will or should delay the demise of the verb *lie*, but I am sure that it is both more interesting and more honest to treat usage variations as rhetorical and linguistic matters, rather than as demons to be exorcised. Students can be interested in a study of dialects. They are perfectly capable long before college of studying dialects seriously, studying textbook materials and making their own observations. They can also be helped to use their reading as a way of collecting information about speech differences. I remember once in grade school having difficulties when I wanted to read *Huckleberry Finn* for a book report—the kind that got rewarded with points. The teacher

suggested that Jean Stratton Porter would be more suitable and agreed to my choice only reluctantly, expressing her fears that I might be corrupted by the nonstandard English in it. I think those days are gone, and students compare different usages and speculate about their effects.

I should point out also that what I am suggesting is not a one-day lesson based on a chart outlining levels of usage. Even if the chart is made more accurate by the inclusion of functional variations as well as social or other levels, this sort of approach is likely to be inadequate. It is hard to combat the implications of the notion of levels, that the top is the best and the bottom worst. Furthermore, the implication of the levels approach is that expressions can be classified and labeled and one need only keep the categories separated.

In other words, usage seems to me to provide one illustration—probably not very important—of the need for a rhetorical approach. All one can do honestly is try to give students the kind of information that will help them anticipate effects and therefore choose with open eyes. The information may be fairly obvious—say that an instructor is annoyed by *contact* as a verb or *wise* as a ubiquitous suffix. The student may decide either to annoy or not to annoy, but he knows what he is doing. Or the information may be much more extensive—a year-long study of a dialect, for example, which may produce some feel for which choices to make. The implications of surveys of usage, of samplings of dialects, of polls of panels of experts like those used to advertise a recent dictionary—the implications are not that we pick a certain locution because other people do—either because most people do or because the best people do. The surveys provide one sort of information we can use in deciding which locution will get the effect we want. We carve an elephant with a knife rather than a potato-masher not because other carvers—even the best carvers—do, but because it works better.

As a second illustration of what I mean by trying to pro-

mote understanding rather than dictation. I suggest looking at a quite different aspect of composing—at writing as a flow or as continuity. One of the few facts so obvious that it can hardly be disputed is that ultimately writing comes to putting one word after another. Whether preceded by extensive pre-writing or projected spontaneously in a burst of feeling, writing becomes a string of words and sentences and paragraphs. It is also, of course, a string of choices—automatic or studied, unhappy or happy. Commenting on the virtues of the valentine he has composed in Mr. Pickwick's name, Sam Weller pronounces, "She'll vish there wos more, and that's the great art o' letter writing."

Skills in making choices depend on the writer's knowledge of both possibilities and limitations. Sometimes, especially as they concern individual words, choices are fairly closely regulated by characteristics of the language. The order of prenominal modifiers, for example, is firm enough to eliminate many alternatives in any position. If it is leading toward *book*, *the green* cannot be followed by *only* or *old* but can be by *cook*: the grammatical pattern requires *the only old green cook book*; any variation from that order is probably ungrammatical. Psycholinguists have estimated, in fact, that if you stop a speaker at any randomly chosen moment, "there will be, on the average, about ten words that form grammatical and meaningful continuations. Often only one word is admissible and sometimes there are thousands, but on the average it works out to about ten."[4] This does not suggest any significant limitation on the possibilities of producing sentences in English; the number of possible different sentences approaches the infinite. But it does suggest the possibility of considering *kinds* of restrictions and possibilities. And I suggest looking at units larger than single words, where grammatical limitations have not been worked out.

I think that it may be possible to isolate restrictions on the order of clauses or sentences which are similar to grammatical regulations on words. That is, extending grammatical studies

to units of discourse longer than sentence parts may be productive. But in the meantime, let me suggest a less precise observation. Every sentence pattern makes a commitment, in some sense limits what can follow it. At the same time, it makes a response to something that has preceded it. A look at the following, chosen almost at random, the opening sentences of a George Orwell essay, illustrates the back-and-forth movement of ideas in a sequence of sentences.

[1] The function of the machine is to save work. [2]

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may not call it work.[3]

The opening sentence commits the writer to a direction, although it does not limit him very strictly. The reader is led to expect something more on the relation between work and the machine, some justification for the appearance of the opening sentence. Sentence 2 responds by restating the notion of the opening sentence more specifically and thereby moving the thought in a more precisely defined direction: "to save work" becomes "leaving us free for more interesting pursuits." Sentence 2 also commits the writer to proceed in justifying the opening sentence, and 3 responds, not with a specification of what precedes but with a more general observation; a kind of conclusion, about 2, that the idea sounds splendid. And 3 obviously commits the writer to say why it sounds splendid, as he does with a specific response in 4 and then a more general evaluation of the example in 5. Sentence 5, phrased though not punctuated as a question, commits the writer to do something more with the splendidness of the proposal, suggesting that there must be some reason for not letting the machine do the work, and 6 responds by turning the discussion, introducing a new aspect of the topic, an exploration of the final phrase of 5, "do something else." The question in 6 commits the writer to an answer or to fuller presentation of the question, and 7 responds by making the question more precise and leading to another question in 8. In a way, the movement of the thought from 6 through 8 is like that from 1 through 3: the writer develops one part of each succeeding sentence to move to a new approach—from "what else they do" in 6, to "something not

work" to "what is work." Sentence 9 offers a string of specifications of the question in 8, and then 10 generalizes, concludes, in a direct answer responding to the commitment of the question. The remaining sentences continue a pattern of generalization and specification. Sentence 11 broadens slightly the conclusion of 10; 12 offers specific illustrations of 11; 13 moves to another generalization and 14 illustrates it specifically.

Such analysis indicates roughly how sentences link ideas, how they move thought in a sequence of commitments and responses. But I am not primarily interested here in techniques for analysis; it is relatively easy to assign roles to various sentences in existing prose, after the roles have been played. I am more interested in examining the movement of prose for any definable characteristics which may provide knowledge about making choices. The analysis above suggests three general observations: (1) Prose moves through a series of linked ideas: one thing leads to another. (2) Commitments vary in scope and purpose: for example, the influence of one sentence may end with the sentence that follows it or may extend over several sentences. (3) Responses also vary, but seem usually to specify or generalize from what has preceded.

All of these need investigation, but I want to comment here on the last of the observations. Usually when we put one sentence after another, the result is one of the following: (1) specification, (2) generalization, (3) diversion, (4) response to an earlier commitment. I think that these account for the sentences in the Orwell selection and for most of the sentences in modern prose. Specification is probably the most obvious—and the most useful. Sentence 2, for example, is a specification of 1, and sentences 4, 9, 12, and 14 are more obviously specifications of the sentences preceding them. Sentences 10 and 11 show the writer working in the opposite direction, generalizing from preceding sentences. Sentence 6 illustrates what may be called a diversion, in which the writer turns from the preceding sentence, usually signaling with *however*, or *but*, to consider a new aspect of his

topic. Sentences 6 and 8 turn the discussion as diversions, but they also, in a sense, return to the commitment of the opening sentence. A sentence like the following, which could appear somewhere along in the middle of the selection, would illustrate the return to an earlier commitment more obviously: *The function of the machine is also to produce more.* This, of course, would also shift the direction of the argument.

My purpose here is only to illustrate how I think we can use rhetoric as a focus in teaching writing, working for understanding, not obedience to rules. We cannot do it all at once. How do you wash an elephant? You have to do it a little at a time, by the square foot. Using rhetoric to approach usage and continuity from sentence to sentence gets at only a small portion of the understanding necessary to anyone making wise rhetorical choices. Many questions remain. What voice and tone does a writer choose? What kinds of questions stimulate invention, help call up ideas for developing writing? How can one arrange material to produce different effects? And so on. I picked the sentence-to-sentence continuity as an illustration, however, because it is not much considered and because I think we write from sentence to sentence—more than we write by following an outline or planning a paragraph with a particular kind of development.

I picked this illustration for another reason: I cannot prove much of what I say about it. I am relying fairly heavily on experience and subjective opinion. Which brings me to what I want to make a kind of parting shot—a defense of the subjective in the teaching of writing. In spite of psycholinguistic and other research, we still know very little about the composing process. We need to rely on the experience of writers and of ourselves. We need, for example, to remember that things happen as we write, that new insights may flash from the search for a word and new interpretations from the problems of fitting two sentences together. Even a slip of the knife may begin an entirely new expression for that elephant's face. This is part of the ex-

citement of creation, the sense of movement, of growth. Students should have a chance to experience it. One obvious implication of what I am saying is that teachers of writing should write.

Aristotle's views on rhetoric have survived with more authority than his views on natural history: he among others of the ancients expressed the view that an elephant has no joints, that being unable to lie down he sleeps against a tree. Hunters spot favorite trees and saw them almost through, then wait for an elephant to start a nap against one of them. As he dozes he leans more heavily on the weakened tree, finally falling with the tree to the ground, where he is helpless. I am not much concerned to correct this error for hunters of elephants; I rather wish they persisted in the old confusion. But in carvers of elephants I am more interested. I prescribe understanding.

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Hamlet: "More Things"

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Hamlet speaks these lines to his wonder-stricken friend at the end of Act I: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,/Than are dreamt of in our philosophy." The philosophy of which Hamlet speaks is natural philosophy, that branch of secular inquiry that studies and comes to know phenomenal reality by examining mensurable causes and effects and the laws that may be extrapolated therefrom. Hamlet has come to know that this philosophy alone cannot unravel the mysteries of experience. There are "more things."

The obvious thing that is beyond the dreams of secular philosophy is the ghost, a being from beyond, a presence that gives to our ordinary experience a further, supernatural dimension. For some this is a hard point to hang on to. They want to write the ghost off as an interesting anachronism (a reflection of popular superstitions in Elizabethan England) or as a gimmick tossed in for the groundlings or, in a more sophisticated vein, as a mere symbol of guilt or kinship or duty. But none of these negations will do. In the world of the play, where for an hour or more we participate in Hamlet's passion and agony, the mysterious ghost *is*.

If we think about it, the ghost haunts us as well as Hamlet. It is a contradictory kind of thing—both "like the King that's dead," yet "dreaded" and boding "some strange eruption to our state"; it is a "portentous figure," "majestical," yet it starts "like a guilty thing Upon a fearful summons." Now it is Hamlet's "father's spirit"; then it is "truepenny," "this fellow in the cellerage," "old mole"; and yet again it is "perturbèd spirit." The ghost is honest, as Hamlet and we discover with the mousetrap—*if* "honest" means that it tells the truth about the death of Hamlet's father and the guilt of Hamlet's uncle. But can we be sure that it is honest otherwise? "The Devil hath power/T' assume a pleasing shape." With truths he can lead us to error—and to our soul's destruction.

The positions taken about ghosts in Shakespeare's day are well known. There was the skeptical position—Horatio's—which

does not fit the play. There was the Catholic position, that ghosts might be the spirits of the departed, especially spirits in purgatory, returned to set things right somehow on earth, or that they might be angels or devils commissioned to help or tempt men. And there was the Protestant position denying that the dead could return: if damned, return to the glimpses of the moon would be like a reprieve; if blessed, then to return would be to suffer in the vale of tears from which God's grace had released them. For the Protestants, ghosts were angels or devils.

Now the ghost declares that it is from purgatory. It identifies itself according to the Catholic belief—but when it speaks of being "Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,/And for the day confin'd to fast in fires," does it speak true? Hamlet seems to doubt. When he first sees it, he calls on the heavens to protect him with "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" To Hamlet the ghost is not purgatorial penitent but "spirit of health or goblin damned," and which of these he cannot tell. Much, much later, when months have passed and the ghost's significance might be presumed to have been settled in his restless mind, Hamlet remains in doubt. He is prompted to his revenge, he says, not by heaven or hell but "by heaven *and* hell." It is curious, parenthetically, that a figure from purgatory, ultimately blessed if immediately scourged by divinity, should preach revenge to man when the Good Book has it, "Revenge is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay."

I do not wish to make a mystery where, to common sense, there is none. I wish to insist that the mystery is here, part of the play—a cue to action, a call to duty, that is ultimately ambiguous, mysterious, part of the precarious uncertainty of the world wherein Hamlet wills and fails to follow through.

Whatever the identity of the ghost, whether the universe's actuality conforms more to the Protestant or the Catholic point of view, it is important to recognize that the world of *Hamlet* does not conform itself, in the minds of its principal inhabitants,

to mere natural philosophy: it is not secular but Christian. Heaven and hell are its ultimate geography—not the equator and the poles. God is its ultimate monarch. The state of one's soul in God's eye is the ultimate question—for the ghost, for the conscience-stricken Gertrude and Claudius, for Ophelia, buried with maimed rites but in consecrated ground, for Laertes, confessing his treachery in the moment of his death and finding forgiveness, for the prince who sees himself as heaven's "scourge and minister." In this world, not the laws of cause and consequence, but the manipulations of God's Providence are the ultimate power: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends,/Rough-hew them how we will."

To these ultimates we must return, but let me first, like the ghost, visit the play's secular setting, the state of Denmark. At the start the country is on a war footing, escalating its armaments, working both Sabbath and during the week, night as well as day. Under the new king's diplomacy, however, the war cloud vanishes and peace is secured.

If it weren't for Hamlet, Denmark would seem to be a pretty good place, healthy, happy, getting on with its private and corporate businesses in a reasonable way. But there *is* Hamlet, and such a prince as we should like ourselves to be—scholar, courtier, soldier, the observed of all observers, beloved of the multitude, the expectancy and rose of the fair state. He relieves himself of his disgusts with ironies so exquisitely mordant we like to echo them: "A little more than kin and less than kind." "Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral bak'd meats/Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables." Or he erupts with an uninhibited vehemence so powerful that we are swept into its current.

> O most wicked speed, to post
> With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
>
> Nay, but to live
> In the rank sweat of an enseamèd bed,
> Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
> Over the nasty sty,—

Shakespeare makes his prince enormously attractive, his basic emotional drives our drives, his basic experience our experience (we all know disillusionment, the betrayal of parents and loved ones, the discovery that the world is complacent and time-serving). William Hazlitt rightly says, "It is *we* who are Hamlet."[1] Shakespeare lets us share with his prince the unique and haunting intelligence from the ambiguous ghost. And Shakespeare so contrives his play that we participate in the workings of Hamlet's mind, the pulsings of his feelings. He gives Hamlet seven soliloquies, seven revelations of his inner state, so that the play is peculiarly like a novel in the first person and we share the protagonist's outlook.

For us then, as for Hamlet, Denmark was once an Eden but is now an unweeded garden, possessed by things rank and gross. A fallen Eve is its queen, and in place of the man—heroic, angelic—who once presided, now sits on the throne, smiling and smiling, the serpent himself. The chamberlain is the serpent's creature. The courtiers, those who might be expected to be morally affronted by a marriage both hasty and, technically, incestuous, appear callowly contented with the new regime. Morally and politically, we sense, something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

This rottenness obtains as well in the state of the human mind. Where once the mental faculties harmonized, now anarchy and entropy prevail. The memory fails, as in Gertrude—"a beast that wants discourse of reason/Would have mourn'd longer." Judgment falls off, as in the people, who having once made mows at Claudius, now pay extravagantly for his likeness in miniature. In the city, so aberrational has taste become, the child actors have usurped the places of their elders. On the stage, adult actors abuse their mystery by outheroding Herod. Further, a player, "But in a fiction, in a dream of passion," can work himself into weep-

[1] William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817) (London: Oxford University Press, 1916), p. 85.

ing, and all for nothing—"For Hecuba!/What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba,/That he should weep for her?" And on the stage of history, adult soldiers abuse sanity by going, twenty thousand of them, "to their graves like beds," fighting

> for a plot
> Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
> Which is not tomb enough and continent
> To hide the slain.

However sullied Hamlet feels himself at the play's beginning, inescapably implicated as he is in his mother's bestiality, as indictor and condemner he stands apart from the others, the solitary alien in the grand court scene of the beginning, the morally immaculate in a terribly tainted realm. White, we tend to see him, against pervasive black. And his talents and quality seem similarly to set him off, his sense of mental perfection no less than his feeling for moral purity marking him apart.

But the play is not terribly old before we discover that the mental illness of Denmark has infected Denmark's prince. Though he has demanded of the Ghost to know the facts of the assassination, that "with wings as swift/As meditation or the thoughts of love," he "May sweep to [his] revenge," we see him stagger on unsinewed legs, holding his head as one distracted, when he finally hears the Ghost's revelation; and only a few moments thereafter he is repining at the very deed he so hungrily demanded to have assigned him. Act I ends with Hamlet's reluctant couplet: "The time is out of joint:—O cursèd spite,/That ever I was born to set it right!" The more intensely we watch Hamlet, the clearer it becomes that his mind is, in a sense, diseased. He does not do the thing he has committed himself to do—not only does not do it but seems to forget it, to lapse into despondent oblivion—or, when he remembers it, he keeps himself at a standstill with doubts and mental complications. This is the burden of his soliloquies—indictments of himself either peaking like a John-a-

dreams unpregnant of his cause or the native hue of his resolution sicklied o'er with the pale cast of his thought. In some desperately self-defeating way, his mind refuses to harmonize passion, memory, and will with occasion.

Let us observe three things about this diseased or paralyzed mind of Hamlet's. The first is that neither early nor late can Hamlet himself fathom it. Shrewdly he accuses himself of cowardice—three separate times—yet what his fear should be he cannot determine. So, in his final soliloquy, baffled, he confesses

> I do not know
> Why yet I live to say, "This thing's to do,"
> Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
> To do 't.

It follows that the answer, to the extent that it lies in Hamlet's private psyche, rests beneath the reach of his introspection. No simple exterior thing, like doubt about the morality of revenge or fear lest his mother be implicated or hesitation lest the crown descend unworthily, and no more profound thing, as that faced with irremediable evil, Hamlet feels himself to be radically powerless—none of these explanations will serve for answer, for there is no reason that Hamlet could not himself discover and assert them. The private answer, if we are to find one, must be one which Hamlet himself cannot bear to face.

The second point is that, until the final moments when, himself dying, he drives his rapier into the king and forces the poisoned wine down the royal gullet, Hamlet gets no closer to his revenge than he was at first. There are those who detect firmer resolve here and there—as when he reacts to Fortinbras's army with the words, "O, from this time forth,/My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!" But there's a difference between thoughts and deeds, and bloody-thoughted Hamlet immediately proceeds not to destroy Denmark's king but to depart from Denmark to England. Or there's Hamlet back from England, his uncle's wickedness freshly documented in his mind, demanding of Horatio,

> Does it not, thinks 't thee, stand me now upon—
> He that hath killed my king and whor'd my mother,
> Popp'd in between th' election and my hopes,
> Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
> And with such cozenage—is't not perfect conscience,
> To quit him with this arm?

Like the Player-Queen, though, Hamlet is protesting too much—accumulating reasons and stoking up his emotions—but doing nothing. And, a moment later, his mission slips from his mind as he bandies artificialities with Osric and lets himself in for the fatal duel. No, Hamlet *can* act with forethought, can do deeds of violence, but he cannot, with forethought, bring himself to the violence of mandated revenge—ever. The ultimate psychological explanation for Hamlet's final fulfillment of his task is *not* to be discovered in some altered awareness that comes to him during the body of the play—some release from ignorance to knowledge, as about the ghost, some escape from repression to expression, as with his mother, some strengthening of his will, as from the stimulus of the player or the army of Fortinbras. Such explanation as we may hope to achieve, like a vanishing point in perspective, lies either outside the frame of the play or if within it, then at its extremes—the beginning or the end, where the mandate comes or where the mandate ceases.

The third point is that Hamlet's mental aberration, as I have suggested, is of a piece with Denmark's; that his illness is typical rather than unique, and that what is sometimes taken to be his special problems, a disjunction between willing and doing, is in fact, shared by others. The Player King speaks at length of how "what we do determine oft we break" since "Purpose is but the slave to memory,/Of violent birth but poor validity." Claudius counsels Laertes to the same effect:

> That we would do,
> We should do when we would: for this "would" changes,
> And hath abatements and delays. . . .

The mythic hero Pyrrhus (about whom the Player declaims) about to slay Priam, finds his sword seeming "i' th' air to stick" and himself, like a painted and immobile figure—"like a neutral to his will and matter"—doing nothing. Laertes, the expert duellist, cannot for the life of him hit Hamlet in either of the first two passes. Claudius suffers a civil war within between his desire to repent and his incapacity:

> Try what repentance can. What can it not?
> Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
> Oh, wretched state! Oh, bosom black as death!
> Oh, limèd soul, that, struggling to be free,
> Art more engag'd!

It follows from the universality of this problem of paralyzed will that the ultimate solution to Hamlet's difficulty cannot lie solely within his private psychology. What the play calls for, in addition to our shrewdest secular, psychological insights, is awareness of causes that lie not within men, but above and beyond them, working through them toward ends of which they are ignorant. To these things we shall come, but first, a question.

If we can see Hamlet participating in the common mental or intellectual infirmities of corrupted Denmark, can it be that he also participates in the common moral infirmities? Does he become less prince charming and more, to use Polonius's apt phrase, "soil'd i' th' working"? A good many critics have thought so. They have pointed to his sexual nausea, as Dover Wilson calls it—his pathological fascination with and revulsion at the actualities of sexual relationship. They have indicted him for a general self-centeredness, an inadequacy of sympathy for his elders, a sophomoric rudeness toward them, a caddish brutality toward Ophelia. You may respond variously to these and other attacks, but let me focus on certain points. When Hamlet refrains from stabbing the kneeling Claudius, he takes on himself to judge his uncle not mortally but immortally, to determine the salvation

or damnation of his soul. As Maynard Mack suggests, this is to play God, or rather, to usurp God's role. Perhaps, though, you consider such conduct in the tragedy-of-blood tradition and morally neutral. Examine, then, Hamlet in his mother's closet, the corpse of Polonius at his feet. To it he addresses mordant ironies, then speaks of lugging the guts into the neighbor room. Is there not here some inadequacy of moral awareness? Polonius is, after all, the father of the woman he once loved. And when he speaks of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the fate he plans for them—

> 't shall go hard
> But I will delve one yard below their mines,
> And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet
> When in one line two crafts directly meet.

—do we not detect less human sensitivity than a kind of games-playing ruthlessness? To my mind Hamlet's sensitivity diminishes, his callousness and pride demonstrably grow from the mousetrap onward. Let me draw attention to a striking, final instance. Laertes has leaped into Ophelia's grave and ranted there. Hamlet steps forward as Hamlet the Dane (the royal title), leaps into the grave, skirmishes with Laertes, and then demands

> Hear you, sir,
> What is the reason that you use me thus?

Think of it. Hamlet has slain Laertes' father, has helped drive his sister insane and to a doubtful death, has intruded on private grief and ceremony, and then asks, in bafflement, "What is the reason that you use me thus?" I would suggest that the Hamlet who seemed so different from his countrymen at the play's beginning, by the end of the play seems very much like them—in mind, in morality. No longer is he white to their black, he is deeply gray—and they, if time permitted, I think we could see as no longer black, either, but gray as well—their evil not without

conscience and grief, their unholy alliance not without its human affection, their response to Hamlet's conduct, suffering. Claudius tries to pray, Gertrude to change herself, Laertes to acknowledge the claims of filial duty, and Ophelia to make peace with a world of people who neither understand her nor help her in the hour of her most need.

The curve of Hamlet's mental and moral nature goes down. That of his mental or spiritual health goes up. I do not intend a paradox. I mean that Hamlet, somewhere in the course of his experience, stops suffering as much as he did before. He hurts still, but less intensely, less unbearably. The change is measured by the difference between the two soliloquies that frame the play's middle part—that prompted by the player's tears, that prompted by the soldiers' march. The content of the two monologues is approximately the same: first, reaction to an external occasion; then contrast between an action in the outer world, which is insufficiently motivated, and Hamlet's inaction despite the most compelling of motivations; then self-interrogation, acknowledgement of forgetfulness, contemplation of cowardice as cause, and resolution to change. The contents are comparable, but the tone alters radically. That of the first is savage, bitter, self-excoriating: "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" That of the second merely bemused: "How all occasions do inform against me." The heat has gone out of it, the passion, the pain, the immediacy.

Between these revelations of Hamlet's inner state what, crucially, has happened? Is it the mousetrap, the demonstration of the king's guilt? Is it the prayer-scene with the king in Hamlet's power and Hamlet's delay a kind of relishing of revenge to come, the more delicious for being protracted? Or is it the interview with his mother, the pouring out of a heart that, from long before the play's beginning, had kept itself pent in? All contribute, surely, though to my mind this interview with Gertrude is the crucial event. Here Hamlet does purge himself, at least in part, of the sexual disgust, the festering shame, the anger that wants

to strike out and hurt. Here he succeeds in wringing his mother's bosom so that she finally sees the deep, ingrainèd spots upon her soul and, to the extent that it is in her power, starts out upon the road of repentance. And here, I suspect, Hamlet discovers his kinship with both uncle and mother in corruption. In the mousetrap, with the likeness of the king that was, he has caught the conscience of the king. With the likeness of the king that was, he has caught the conscience of his mother. And at this point the ghost appears again—the likeness of the king that was—and catches Hamlet's conscience, reminding him that he, too, has forgotten, broken his deep-sworn vow, failed. From this time, Hamlet ceases so totally to stand apart, alien. He senses himself again finally, a member of the human and Danish community. And he joins it by entrusting to his mother the secret of his feigned insanity. He trusts her, whom he has distrusted, with his life.

As the play comes to its great ending, Hamlet—like Lear, like Prospero—has reengaged with the mankind he has repudiated. His mind has suffered the prevailing mutabilities, his moral nature has coarsened, but he has come out from under the worst of his curse, as it were. When he speaks of defying augury, of the time being to come if it is not now, the readiness being all, though he applies his words to his own death, he might as well be speaking of the king's, whose life with his life and whose death with his death have from first to last been inextricably joined. Hamlet has surrendered the role of author and accepted that of mere agent. Not my will, Lord, but thine . . . Hamlet has become, for the first time, ready, and so fit for use.

At the play's ending we are invited increasingly to a sense of powers larger and deeper than man's at play, to a sense of the supernatural. Hamlet will narrate the extraordinary coincidences that released him from the toils of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and returned him safely to Elsinore. A divinity has seemed to him to shape his ends. And he has sensed that heaven was ordinant in the coincidence of his having with him his father's signet

with which to seal the forged commission to England.

We chronicle these matters in our critical memories. With them we place certain striking coincidences of which we learn in that graveyard where Adam and Cain, Alexander and Caesar, pettifogging lawyer, painted lady, and court jester abide in timeless democracy—coincidences that speak beyond change to pattern and purpose. That first gravedigger, jowling skulls to the ground, singing and wise-cracking—he came to his job, we learn, thirty years ago—the number of years, coincidentally, the Player-King was married to the Player-Queen. Thirty years ago: the year that Hamlet the Elder fought and defeated Old Norway (in the encounter of which Horatio informed us so long ago at the play's beginning). Thirty years ago: the year that Hamlet was born, Hamlet who, at the end of Act I, cursed the spite that, the time's being out of joint, he had been *born* to set it right. Born to set it right. Born at the time of a memorable international incident. A king of Denmark—noble, chivalric, admirable in the currency of secular judgment—had staked a part of his kingdom against an equal part of the kingdom of Norway. Kingdoms, some of us suddenly realize, are not given kings to gamble with. They are the solemn entrustments of God Himself. In His place, as every Elizabethan and Jacobean knew, the anointed monarch stood. And in that glorious duel, so chivalry remembers it, something was deeply wrong—in Denmark, in Norway. Something started to rot. One begins to understand why the Ghost spoke of his foul crimes.

But the Ghost has been receding from our consciousness as from Hamlet's—a memory now rather than a presence, a pawn removed from the table as the endgame is being played. Now while time runs out and patterns work out, Providence itself looms over the board. The pieces converge—Fortinbras from his pelting Polish wars, the English ambassador from the unintended executions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Claudius expecting the end of his agony, Laertes expecting revenge and honor, Hamlet

expecting momentary diversion—each seeking his own ends, each ironically fulfilling quite other ends, just so, as he moves in providential patterning. Laertes is unable to strike: Hamlet is unwilling to drink: Gertrude wishes to express her tenderness to the son she has regained: Claudius sits frozen as his best laid plans unravel. The duellers become incensed, each mortally hurting the other, Hamlet retaining just life enough to release himself from his mandate before achieving the felicity of death.

In a sudden, mortally *un*planned moment, the kingdom's rottenness has been purged, its throne firmly fitted by Fortinbras. It has happened providentially in Denmark. And in eternity, too, it has been providential. Laertes has died confessing and forgiven—going, one imagines, to bliss. Claudius dies, lips lying, death on his hands—going, one believes, to eternal damnation. Gertrude dies in the act of choosing blindly—as she has always been blind—but this time choosing Hamlet before Claudius, going, one prays, to salvation. And Hamlet, perturbèd spirit, dies possessing the consummation he has devoutly wished, going—one hears Horatio saying it—flights of angels singing him to rest.

The Reunion of Historical and Literary Study

David C. Fowler

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David C. Fowler

I used to worry about the adverse consequences of specialization on our educational system. A few years ago I even proposed a reform of the Arts and Sciences curriculum at the University of Washington to correct what I called the centrifugal effect of departmental autonomy in the College. At the time I was president of the Faculty Senate, and was able to present my proposals with more fanfare and publicity than would have been possible for me as a faculty member at large. My suggestion for the renewal of contact between academic disciplines was modest, the plan was voluntary, and I presented it to the senate and to every committee that would listen to me with good humor and conviction. But nothing happened.

My experience with curriculum reform reminded me of the episode of the Marabar caves in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. A remarkable feature of these caves is an unusual kind of echo. If you stand inside one of them and speak a word or phrase, the sound that returns to you is a noncommittal, random mixture of your original utterance. If you say "God is love," the echo comes back with "boum!" If you say "all is vanity," the answer is, as always, "boum!" The parallel is obvious. I spent the better part of a year roaming the caves of academe and shouting, "Reform the curriculum," but the only response I ever heard was "boum!"

Yet in spite of this experience, I am not at all discouraged. I believe that a counter-tendency is already at work, moving us in the direction of reintegration of academic studies. Students at the University of Washington have attacked the system of distribution requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences. Committees are at work even now revising and redesigning courses in the humanities along new lines. Experimental courses are being offered. Above all, it is interesting to realize that these developments stem from spontaneous student criticism of the status quo. If faculty members cannot agree on reform, we now have an alternative: students will grope their way toward a new curriculum

of their own design.

For these and other reasons the title of my paper is meant to be a prophecy. I believe that we will soon see in our schools and colleges reunion of historical and literary study. What form it will take in our educational curriculum is difficult to say, nor is this my main concern at present. Suffice it to say that in my own field, which is the Middle Ages, there has been a phenomenal development in the past several years across the country of interdisciplinary medieval and Renaissance groups. In these groups specialists from the humanities and social sciences get together out of a common interest in their cultural period which transcends the traditional differences of approach that have in the past kept them apart. I now find myself preferring these interdisciplinary meetings to the gargantuan conventions of the Modern Language Association, where linguists speak only to linguists, and literary critics convene to engage in increasingly narcissistic dialogue with each other. *Mea culpa!*

Meanwhile, amid these alarums and excursions, I suggest that there is a mandate for teachers to move independently in the direction I have suggested by encouraging interdisciplinary studies in the classroom. How this can be done will depend on the individual teacher and his or her special training or interest. My own background leads me to see the mandate as a call for the reunion of historical and literary study, and I therefore want to offer some examples of how this can be done by drawing on my own experience as a member of an English department. Teachers in other areas of the humanities or in the social sciences will have a somewhat different orientation, but I nevertheless hope that my suggestions may still be of value.

One of the courses I was first asked to teach at the University of Washington was called "The Bible as Literature." This is a standard service course offered by most English departments, and usually focuses on the King James Bible as "the noblest monument of English prose." Yet from the very start I found

myself repelled by the aesthetic technology that this phrase implies. Hence it may have been in the preparation for this course that my rebellion against the specialist's approach had its beginning. In any case I decided to use a modern translation of the Bible as text (the Revised Standard Version), and prepared lectures on the Old and New Testaments with a strong historical emphasis.

Of course it should be understood that considerable attention must be given to literary form, particularly in teaching something as ancient as the Bible, since anyone who reads the text without literary awareness will often be deprived of understanding by a wrong set of expectations. Hence I stress in class such things as chronicle writing, poetic forms, and prophetic style, but these are presented as means to an end. The main objective is an understanding of the development of Israel's religious thought and institutions in the context of Near Eastern civilization as expressed in the Bible. My bibliography for the course cuts across traditional fields of study, and includes books on historical geography, archaeology, textual criticism, paleography, literary analysis, and studies of prophecy and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Each student must report on a book of his own choice from one of these areas.

A good example of the importance of history in the course can be seen in the emphasis given to the Babylonian Exile. Where can the impact of this important event be seen in the Bible? I raise this question very early, while lecturing on the historical background, and ask the students to watch for evidences of the Exile in their reading. By the time we have finished the Old Testament, most students are able to write perceptive answers to this question, pointing out at least four areas where its effects can be seen. Classical prophecy, for example, is transformed, after the Exile, into visionary apocalypse; Israel's conception of God changes from the relative monotheism of Moses to the absolute monotheism of 2 Isaiah; Josiah's centralization of worship in the Jerusalem temple is ultimately replaced by local synagogues

in the period of the dispersion, and the system of animal sacrifices is gradually replaced by a new center of worship, the Torah itself. Indeed the Bible may in a sense be said to have arisen from the ashes of Jerusalem, after the Jews returned from Babylon to rebuild the holy city in the fifth century B.C.

Of course it is to be hoped that students will value and appreciate the quality of biblical literature, but I don't think this should be the primary or explicit aim of the teacher. The songs of the suffering servant in 2 Isaiah are magnificent poetry, for example, but this is not a matter for class discussion. Instead we explore the way in which the notion of Israel as the suffering servant of the Lord emerges from a background of religious persecution in Babylon, and how this idea is later a guiding principle in the life of Christ, who becomes the "light to the nations" envisioned by the prophet. In this way I try to suggest that there is a necessary connection between the experience of Israel as a nation in the Old Testament, and the spread of its religious knowledge to the rest of the world as initiated in the New Testament. Or to put it another way, the "light to the nations" was first ignited in the fiery furnaces of Babylon.

A second course that I have taught for some years is Arthurian romance, and here again, without premeditation, my approach has been interdisciplinary and strongly historical. For one thing, medieval romance transcended national and linguistic boundaries, and hence must be studied in several languages (especially English, French, German, and Latin) in order to be seen as a whole. The evolution of Arthurian romance itself extends over a period of four hundred years, from the Latin chronicle of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the first half of the twelfth century to the collection in English made by Sir Thomas Malory in the late fifteenth century. And to explore the question of the historicity of Arthur we must go back to the chronicle of Gildas, written about the year 540. The treatment of a development of this magnitude in a literature class requires considerable emphasis, early in the course,

on the history of medieval Europe.

When literature is the primary subject, of course, history should never be introduced for its own sake. My emphasis in treating the earlier period is to distinguish between the British and English cultures and to stress the Celtic origins of Arthurian tradition. In presenting the history of the later period, the high Middle Ages, I try to say enough about the development of medieval ideology and institutions to enable students to relate these to the evolution of Arthurian romance itself. Perhaps this latter case may serve as an example of the importance of historical background for an understanding of medieval romance.

To clarify the evolution of romance I distinguish three main developments, which may be called the epic, chivalric, and religious traditions. Each tradition had its typical hero: Gawain (epic), Lancelot (chivalric), and Galahad (religious). When viewed in proper sequence, these three literary traditions can be seen to reflect important phases of medieval culture history. The epic tradition was an expression of the ideals of that English society which flourished in Northumbria in the seventh and early eighth centuries, and in Wessex in the ninth. King Alfred may be considered its symbol, and Harold of England its last defender. Its spirit survived beyond this time, however, as is attested by the poetry of the alliterative revival in the fourteenth century. The chivalric tradition was a reflection of the interests and ideals of feudal society, which reached its height during the reign of Henry II; its last and ignoble defender was King John. The religious tradition grew out of the great revival of interest in mysticism and theology in general in the twelfth century, along with the rapidly increasing political power of the church. One thinks immediately of Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas, though the triumph of Christianity at this time is perhaps best symbolized by the pontificate of Innocent III.

The fortunes of Arthur in the course of these developments are instructive. In the romances of the epic tradition, he is a heroic

chieftain who fights giants and is the exemplar of courage, loyalty, and generosity. Gawain is modelled after him. The Round Table is held together by Arthur's personality. But feudal allegiance is based on an abstraction: loyalty to one's overlord, in theory at least, is a duty regardless of his personal qualities. Hence in the chivalric tradition Arthur recedes into the background, and with him Gawain, who yields the place of honor to Lancelot. Lancelot is from France, and "right well he speaks the language thereof." This is true because he is literally the creation of France, or, more accurately, of the French courtly poets. He overshadows Arthur. Then when Galahad and the grail appear, Lancelot in turn is displaced. Worldly knights all come under the indictment of ascetic, specifically Cistercian Christianity, which Galahad represents. And Arthur is reduced to a mere shade, mourning the disintegration of his order.

In order to underscore the relationship of these literary developments to medieval history it might be said that the victory of William the Norman over Harold of England was reflected in the victory of Lancelot over Gawain; and that the triumph of Galahad over Lancelot, foreshadowed in the martyrdom of Thomas à Becket, corresponds to the humiliation of King John by Pope Innocent III. It should be emphasized, also, that these three traditions were not separate phenomena. They were all related; in periods of transition they coexisted, and each contributed to the formation of its successor. The epic tradition, with its glorification of battle, was essentially pre-Christian in spirit; chivalry paradoxically combined pride in fighting ability with Christian ideals (beautifully illustrated in the Crusades), and the church had to condemn the one in order to preserve the other. It is evident that the three traditions thus distinguished also represent stages in the penetration of Christianity into medieval society and culture. History therefore provides a significant background against which the vast panorama of medieval romance literature may be viewed.

A final example of an interdisciplinary subject is a course

titled "The English and Scottish Popular Ballad," involving music as well as history. This may seem a surprising choice, since critics have for a long time insisted that ballads are independent of time and place. When I first taught the course, in fact, I tried to organize my materials on this assumption, but it wouldn't work for me. Once again I found that full justice could not be done to the literature without the introduction of historical background. With this was included considerable attention to the musical setting of the ballads and the influence of music on the words. As a result the course seemed to gain in coherence and I was able to develop, with considerable help from the students, a theory of ballad origins and a conception of the historical evolution of ballad style.

The English and Scottish ballads originated in the fifteenth century, when the metrical romance tradition of the later Middle Ages joined the mainstream of folksong to create a type of narrative song which we now call the ballad. This happened when the barons withdrew their patronage, beginning in the fifteenth century, and professional minstrels were forced to seek a new audience among the common people. Here for the first time the stories of medieval romance were compressed and fitted to the rounded melodies of folksong tradition. Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the narrative element remained strong and tended to overshadow the musical setting which it had acquired. But when the tide turned, about 1700, the long-standing supremacy of minstrelsy ended, and the music of the ballad increasingly came to determine the course of its evolution. Thereafter a remarkable series of stylistic developments made the eighteenth century a major creative period in the history of balladry. To view the ballads in this way is to see a historical and social development extending from the era of the professional minstrel to the singing family of the eighteenth century. At the same time, moreover, it enables the student to see and understand in depth the evolution of ballad style.

I suspect that my experience in preparing these courses is not

unique, and that many a teacher has found himself also swimming against the stream of specialization. Perhaps when curriculum committees of the schools and colleges finally bring forward their proposals for reform, they will discover that the revolution has already occurred spontaneously in thousands of classrooms. I certainly hope so.

Nevertheless I can't leave this subject without making a modest suggestion, in the hope that I may have the ear of a few beleagured curriculum committee members. The model for reform exists already, I think, on many campuses across the country. I refer to the many area studies programs that have sprung into being in the last few decades. The Far East Institute at the University of Washington is a good example. From one point of view, the Institute could be regarded as a flagrant instance of specialization. At the same time, however, it is a model interdisciplinary program. China, for example, is studied from all points of view: language, literature, religion, and history are all taught by a single faculty working in close cooperation and trying out ideas on each other in interdisciplinary seminars. This, I take it, is a good model for use in the revision of humanities and social science programs. We should coordinate our various efforts at reform of these curricula by envisioning an area studies program for western man, with faculty organized into interdisciplinary groups.

By way of conclusion let me remind you of a very recent educational development. I refer to the programs of black studies being instituted across the country on various campuses. At the University of Washington I have observed with great interest that black faculty members are resisting any suggestion that their program be broken up into specialized departments in the manner of traditional academic subjects. Who can blame them? Why should they have to inherit this fragmentation? Rather we should join with them in a major revision of the curriculum that will follow the pattern of area studies and give to the humanities and the social sciences a new integrated vision and a new vitality.

The Lively Arts of Language in the Elementary Schools

William J. Iverson

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The term "lively arts" usually refers to drama on the stage, in the motion picture, on television or radio. But I want to use "lively arts" to encompass a larger theater. Language, it seems to me, is a "lively art" in all its uses. Language carries life artfully even in the most pedestrian exchange. The casual greetings we pass to one and all, the idle chit-chat we employ to protect ourselves from our friends, the guarded phrases we grasp to keep strangers at a distance—in short, language, which in a hundred ways keeps private the true feelings we do not wish to bare—language still is a lifeline we fling in the human stream to keep us afloat.

Such is language all life long, but surely language is never again so lively an art as during childhood. For it is then that the first reaching out comes and the first intimations arise that there are fellow travellers aboard. Joy can be shared, and sorrow, too. And what a sustaining revelation that is. A child learns he is not alone and language brings him that primal message. The nuances of sound give substance to tenuous feeling—carry it out to the one and back from the other. St. John had it right when he said, "The Word was God." There is a divinity in language which enables human beings to touch one another at the heart of life, now and across the centuries.

There is then no greater privilege held by the school for childhood, the elementary school, than the opportunity to nourish language early and well. We who are teachers in the schools mold malleable substance. The way in which we who are teachers listen to children lets them know whether there is a fellow human being here or an alien nothing. The way in which we who are teachers talk to them lets children know whether there is true charity there or a deceptive tongue, a sounding brass. The way in which we who are teachers read to them lets children know whether there is promise there or an arid land. The way in which we who are teachers write to them lets children know whether they dare risk themselves or must pen safe emptiness. Listening,

speaking, reading, writing—the lively arts of language—should sustain children. The schools ought to develop the art to reach out to life and the grace to take it in again through the revivifying word.

In this reaching out and taking in through language, children define themselves. Language resonates far beyond the sounds children voice or the utterances they hear. The sounds and utterances reverberate within and tell children who they are. Children try a word, a phrase, a larger piece of discourse. They watch the responses they get with an intense, persisting vigilance. They listen raptly to what others say to them. They string the beads of language in and out in a thousand and one patterns. And soon they learn which pattern evokes a smile and which a frown. That learning is one of the great miracles of childhood. No one knows why children are able to acquire this virtuoso talent. Not the linguists, who put it to some mysterious inherent competence. Not the psychologists, who think it must be learned "somehow." Neither is able to account for the miracle in any definitive way. So there is no point, as of now, in speculating about why children can define themselves so wondrously through language. Let us just be grateful they can. Let us furnish the kind of learning ecology in our schools for childhood which sustains rather than stultifies.

How shall we establish this kind of learning ecology? We begin by recognizing that we need to base our environment in the primacy of talk. James Britton of the University of London makes the point graphically: "Talk is the sea on which everything else floats." I know the point is not new. Otto Jespersen, the great Danish linguist, said in 1933:

> In our so-called civilized life print plays such an im-

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give-and-take between speaker and hearer.[1]

No, the point is not new. But the fact still remains that "talk is tucked in between the nooks and crannies of the curriculum," to use again the telling language of James Britton. Talk is still viewed as a kind of filler among the solid pieces of learning. We seem to think that ability to listen and to speak will just sift in naturally while we bring to bear all our strength raising each new piece into place in the structure we call the curriculum. Yet a moment's reflection makes it clear that we continue to misplace our energies. Unless a child has built for himself a real place among his fellows through "the universe of discourse," as James Moffett calls it, no amount of devotion to the solid pieces, the social sciences, the natural sciences and mathematics, will help him to survive.

If we have based our learning ecology on the primacy of talk, how must we act? First, we must as teachers personify the ways in which talk joins people. We must articulate ideas and feelings with warmth and honesty. We must tell stories whether we are in the first years of school or the last. We must let the language of story exemplify all the creative potentialities of our mother tongue to relate people to one another. But, more important, in the ordinary exchange between teacher and child, we must let the unifying feelings shine through: joy and despair, laughter and sadness. A teacher who does not talk with fulfilling humanity

conditions children to soundproof mind and spirit. Children close themselves off and withdraw into life-robbing isolation.

Second, as teacher-learners we must join the children in creating the common human bonds which language helps to fashion. One of the best media for this joined-creating is drama—especially improvised drama. The improvisation can be either in an effort to recapture the spirit and substance of a good story or a fine poem or in an attempt to play out the feelings and issues of human relationships. In either case, language gains reality and impact which ordinary classroom interchange simply does not effect. Improvised drama permits a free exploration of the potentialities of the intonations, sounds, and rhythms of language. The speaker who loses himself in the drama no longer is inhibited by the expectations he feels when he is speaking in his own name. If he is normally retiring, in drama he can try being aggressive. If he is big of voice, in drama he can try being soft of speech. He can extend his life space in a hundred different roles. He can achieve an emotional release from the experimentation, sensing the power of the spoken word to stir, to calm, to anger, to mollify. He can be swept by the unpredictable dialogue into trying to find language suited to the feeling context which has that very moment arisen. He can lend tonal vestments to word and utterance in a driving desire to feel attuned to the nuances of relationship being projected. He can, in short, rise to a new perspective on the ways language both facilitates and denies human communality.

I have suggested that this playing out of human interchange be a joined-creating. I meant to invite us who are teachers to be in the middle of the drama—not every time but at wisely chosen intervals. We as teachers can lose ourselves too in the play and thereby show candor in language which the teaching role often inhibits. We can reassure children who find it difficult to lose themselves in a role that we too can be angry or grief stricken. We can be stupid or foolish, wicked or uncouth. The play's the thing—it supports a larger honesty than ordinary discourse per-

mits. Of course, teacher participation does have to be selective. We must not be in every drama. We must only occasionally play a leading role. We must not dominate; we must facilitate. Still if we join the creating now and then, we reinforce the sense of community through language that will spill over into other classroom interchange. As James Moffett says:

> Drama is the most accessible form of literature for young and uneducated people. It is made up of action; and the verbal action is of a sort we practice all the time. A kindergarten child . . . can soliloquize and converse, verbalize to himself and vocalize to others. No written symbols are required. Drama is primitive: not only does it hit us at the level of sensation, affect, and conditioned response, but it seems in all cultures to be virtually the first, if not the first, verbal art to come into being, because it is oral and behavioral and functional, evolving out of real-life activities, such as propitiating gods, making rain, and girding for war. Indeed, a number of modern trends, such as happenings and the antiplay, have exerted force to return drama to a communal actuality.[2]

One of the interchanges desperately in need of the humanizing spill-over which improvised drama can create is classroom discussion. Most of what is called discussion in schools is not discussion at all but simply a kind of guessing game in which children try to stumble upon what we as teachers want. And what we want may be only a repeating of memorized and unrelated facts. Real discussion is joined when an issue arises and honest differences are held. Then there is no ready-made decision about what is right and what is wrong. Discussion is entered to clarify the differences in points of view and what the differences imply. The differences may or may not be reconciled. What is important is the process where ideas and feelings are rubbed against each other.

Children learn to respect differing values and in the exchange clarify their own. They learn that others can be quite adamant in holding positions which seem to them, at least at the outset, quite indefensible; yet they may be good friends, excellent playmates, superb in a thousand other human ways. Surely respect for such honest difference is critical to survival of a democracy. Where can children learn how to differ about an idea or a feeling and yet retain full respect for a person as a human being? Certainly one place ought to be the elementary school.

Essential to such genuine discussion is size of group. It is only rarely a whole class can enter into true give-and-take. Everyone must have a go at the issue if real discussion is to be joined. A group larger than about a half dozen simply diffuses this kind of continuing personal engagement which true discussion demands. But then we teachers are used to working with a number of small groups, each pursuing a different course.

Even in the small group, the issue to be confronted must be real and of immediate as well as of long term importance to the children. The persisting ethical choices we all face typify the kinds of issues which really impel committed discussion. The basic problems—honesty, responsibility, fairness, and a thousand others as old as man—need to be worked over anew by each generation. After all every one comes fresh at one time to the old questions. Am I my brother's keeper? Canst thou by searching find out God? Each young person must make his own answer. In the making of his answer each child needs an open hearing among his fellows to know what values he does hold and what may follow from these positions. He thus gains perspective on what is often not quite consciously held, or if consciously held, often never subjected to any kind of public scrutiny.

One final illustration of the power of the voice to mold idea and feeling can be found in choral speaking. We can use uncomplicated choral verse to make real to the ear poetry's sounding appeal. We stand with John Ciardi who once wrote:

> For years I have read poetry as a sensual act, sounding each word and cadence in my head and often saying the lines aloud in response to a moving passage. Good poetry . . . carries with it a notation as detailed and as specific as that of music. . . . Like music, poetry gives signals to indicate its own tempo, emphasis, pauses, stresses, modes, and moods: like music it must be taken as indicated. To speed up either one [music or poetry] simply for the sake of speed would be disaster. The best conductor is not the man who gets the orchestra through a score in the shortest elapsed time . . . The best conductor is the one who leads the orchestra through the score in the most sensitive way. . . .

Our zeal for choral verse is tempered by our desire for long-term affection for poetry. We do not overdo it. We are content when children who rebel at solo recitation are lured into speaking poetry. They give voice under the persuasion of the group while at the same time they are granted protective anonymity. Gradually within the group they learn the feel of rhythm and sound and imagery. We do not endanger this slow-budding sensitivity by pressing too grimly toward performance effects. The principal end desired for the children is not performance for others but satisfaction for themselves.

Indeed in all these teaching strategies we place our greatest faith in what children do for themselves: telling stories, dramatizing, discussing, choral speaking. We place in an ancillary role—important but not enjoying first priority—those activities where the initiative, the shaping, and in fact most of the doing is by others. For example, no one denies the power of the media in our time: television, motion picture, other projected material, radio, recording. But we try to remember that the power is best employed if it is a stimulant and not simply a tranquilizer. We see that if the media are completely fulfilling, if they do all the work and leave the children semi-comatose, they do not serve well.

Instead we seek always—whether in television, motion picture, recording—to use the medium primarily as incentive. We want the children to assume the initiative, the shaping, the doing. The production facilities which can be brought to bear on a television program, a motion picture, a recording are awesome indeed. The temptation to the producer is to let the medium take over and leave no room for the children to respond.

Especially, if the medium is used to project literature we do not want the medium to be so compelling that each child does not respond to the literature in his own unique way, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, in his own imagination. We do not want to coerce absolute uniformity in response. The prime invitation of literature is to add creatively out of each imagination to that which is only suggested. No literature should ever be presented through any medium so comprehensively that children cannot add individual imaginative extensions. There is never only one correct response in literature. The medium must not make it seem that what the medium represents is the only right way to respond and that furthermore it has done the whole job. It is absolutely essential in literature that each child know he can and should respond with his own image, each image different yet true to the spirit of the writing. If children feel they must yield to responses completely supplied by the medium—every child's response completely paralleling his classmates'—then attraction to individual reading in literature is reduced, not enhanced. Each child must feel he has the privilege—and a proprietary interest in—giving his own responses to the invitations he senses in literature. So we use the media. But we keep their power in proper perspective.

Indeed whatever we do to engage children in the lively arts of language, we remember that the key word is "perspective." Whatever we do, we want to help children know where the lasting power of language is. We try to avoid anything that subverts the private discoveries each can make.

When a child is able to read he adds a new capacity for

making these private discoveries. For as Richard Whitlock said in 1654:

> Books are life's best business. Vocation to them hath more emolument coming in, then all the other busy terms of life. . . . They are for company, the best friends, in doubts. Counsellors: in Dumps. Comforters: Time's Prospective, the Home Traveller's Ship or Horse. . . . The Mind's Best Ordinary, Nature's Garden and Seed-plot of Immortality.[4]

The wisdom of Whitlock's words rings as true today as it did over three hundred years ago. Indeed the wisdom may be even more relevant today than when it was composed.

Literature speaks with an ageless tongue. We teachers look out every day at young faces. We want somehow the time we are together to make a difference. Yet neither you nor I are possessed of infinite wisdom or even unbounded cheer. Every age renews the old doubts about values. Perhaps no age has been more torn than ours. But the anxieties are not new. In literature the best that has been thought and said is ready to stimulate thinking, to sharpen appraisal, to refine judgment.

Of course, it is not enough just to have books around however solid the literature. At long last we have come to know that we must have a planned literature program to teach children how to read literature to gain its highest satisfactions. The key words here are "program" and "teach."

"Program" means that materials are selected because they develop solid literary appreciation. "Teach" means that the distinctive literary qualities of the selections are revealed through systematic instruction.

We must not make the mistake of assuming that basic skill-building selections can serve as literature. If a story is chosen or adapted for skill-building, it cannot also serve as literature. Let us be grateful if a skill-building story indeed does lend itself to

phonics, structural analysis, or some other word identification skill. Let us be glad if such a story indeed does show the kernel patterns of the English sentence. Let us be happy if such a story offers models of paragraph organization. But let us not for a moment confuse skill-building with appreciation-building. Skill-building stories are chosen with a different end in view and if we are fortunate they serve that end. We can be certain that such stories do not build appreciation for literature.

If we truly want literary appreciations, we must select stories, poems, plays, biographies which stand in their own right as literary exemplars. Every selection must stand as a model of its own literary form. A fine writer's diction cannot be corrupted to furnish drill in word identification. His style cannot be subverted to provide practice in predication. His structure cannot be stripped to stress proportionate paragraphing. No, if we want appreciation for literature to become for children "life's best business," then we must read a selection as it was written. It must be as free and full and unconstrained as the writer intended.

But how do we develop through such selections ability to read literature with appreciation? We must have, I repeat, a clear and workable program. We must show in our program what the qualities of good literature are. We must take time to teach for the high joy only literature can bring.

Now let us see the way in which such a program in literature functions. First, the program encourages the young reader to take a new attitude toward words. We know he must recognize *what* a word means. That he learns in his skill-building work. But in literature he must go beyond *what* to *how* and *why*. *How* does a word call upon appreciative response? Is it through the word's very sound? A word may buzz or hum, or even sing. Is it through the word's rhythmic beat? A word may stroll, or march, or even dance. Is it through the imagery which the word flashes upon the imagination? A word may call to the eyes, to the taste, to the touch, indeed to all the senses. So in literature, it is *how* a

word means that makes the impact.

And similarly, a young reader of literature must learn *why* a word was chosen. *Why* did a writer wish a sounding word at that point? Or why did he wish rhythm? Or why imagery? The diction of a writer is a crucial key to appreciation of literature. It might be taught through a program in literature. And we must take time to teach for it.

Second the program in literature encourages the child to take a new attitude toward connected discourse. In skill-building work he concentrates on literal comprehension where conformity in response is prized. In literature he concentrates on appreciation where individuality in response is encouraged. The privilege of individual imaginative elaboration is basic to appreciation. Each child must become his own artist when he reads literature. Out of what each lives, knows, feels, and cares about must come a response only he can make.

In addition to encouraging this creativity in response, the program in literature must make clear the potentialities in response for each literary form. The possibilities are different in story, poem, play, biography. We must help the child to identify these potential satisfactions. Is a story marked by artful suspense? Is a poem distinguished by superb rhythm? Is a play illuminated by crackling dialogue? Is a biography highlighted by sharp contrast? The child must be alerted to whatever the appeals are. For that is the beginning of appreciation.

Moreover, the child in a literature program must learn to use the ideas and vocabulary of appreciation to discuss these distinctive literary appeals. The ideas and terms are neither difficult nor unduly extensive. Attempts to avoid literary ideas and terms not only result in confusing circumlocutions but also actually diffuse appreciation. From the beginning the young reader must be taught the same ideas and vocabulary of literary discussion which will be employed at all levels of his education. We have never done young readers a service by delaying to the high school years

the ideas and language of literary appreciation.

This kind of a program in literature has distinct, observable advantages. First, it makes clear what appreciation is. Literary appreciation is too often both nebulous and neglected. Second, it provides a vocabulary which will clarify and focus literary discussion. Third, it builds an approach which young people can use as long as they read literature. Fourth, it increases appreciation because the program focuses on the qualities of literature which lead to pleasure. Fifth, it adds security because the teaching approach makes clear what to discuss in literature, how to discuss it, and why differing readers may derive differing satisfactions.

Shall we not begin? Shall we not have for children a full-fledged program in literature? Shall we not take time to have the young well-read about what has been, about what might be? Shall we not take time to have young people share the enduring wisdoms? The poet George Crabbe wrote:

> This, books can do:—nor this alone;
> they give
> New views to life, and teach us
> how to live:
> They soothe the grieved, the stubborn
> they chastise:
> Fools they admonish, and
> confirm the wise:
> Their aid they yield to all: they never shun
> The man of sorrow, nor the wretch undone:
> Unlike the hard, the selfish, and the proud,
> They fly not sullen from the suppliant crowd:
> Nor tell to various people various things,
> But show to subjects, what they show to
> kings.[5]

Now let us reach for the culminating lively art of language—the art of writing. We speak of writing as the culminating art

because the principal source of both incentive and skill in writing is experience as it is shaped through listening, speaking, and reading. If we teach these language arts emphasizing the appeals to the individual experience, we point the way to better writing.

Listening is a precondition to writing. The effects of language well told and well read are pervasive. A great variety of language ought to be heard. Listening helps a student to know how the words ought to go. Similarly there is lasting influence of speaking on writing. A child who masters even modestly the art of telling a story or discussing his point of view hears better how to say what he wants to say. That is especially true if he has taken his budding art to a new clientele. He may be a third-grader and try his story on the first grade. Or he may be a sixth-grader and with some cohorts carry on a panel discussion for the fourth grade. These speaking experiences will clearly show in the art of his writing.

Similarly a goodly store of remembered reading guides the pen. A good reader conducts a dialogue with the writer as he reads. Reading is no passive process. Affirming, qualifying, identifying, rejecting, supporting, denying as he does, the reader is sharpening his own linguistic tools for writing.

When children begin to write, they are trying to make something new for themselves. They are trying to relate experiences previously unrelated. In so doing, they are deliberately reopening experience. They try to give this new sense of the experience shape and focus. When the new view of experience matters to them, they work hard and unremittingly. They soon learn that creating is not all joy. They strive for their own sense of symmetry, harmony, even elegance.

In very early writing, when a child is dictating as part of a group, it helps to have an immediate involving experience: a pet animal in the classroom, a new baby at home, an improvised play. But imaginative reworking of never-never land can also be quite as involving. Whatever the group dictating focuses upon,

it helps to have time to plan and to talk. It helps to be able to recast and revise until all are satisfied. It helps to have an audience beyond the immediate group who composed the writing. Another class would do. Or a copy could be proudly sent home for all the family to view.

As a child begins his career as an independent writer, he needs increasing support. Personal conferences are usually more helpful than written commentary. That way a sensitive teacher can tell at once how much advice would be liberating and how much would be constricting. Quick amends can be made for treading on what may be especially dear to the young author. If comments are written, even more compassion should guide the pen—and economy, too. It is rarely wise to attempt complete reformation of character through one script. After all, there is something terribly concrete about writing, both for the child and for the teacher. For the child the written word is much more threatening than the spoken. The written word stays there. The child commits himself in writing and it stays there. A spoken word dies away. The written word stays there.

So we as teachers ought to preserve the right of the child to throw away. Not every effort of the most skilled writer is successful. The wastebaskets of professional writers bulge with discarded writing. A child should not be forced to polish his failures. True, we must help some children recognize small successes. No child must come to feel everything he writes is only fit to throw away. But some throwing away, both for those with large and for those with modest talent, is truly creative, for the discards let them try afresh.

And that willingness to risk the ego again is crucial to writing. Otherwise, long before the high school years children learn to play it safe. They may not commit many offenses against accepted usages. The spelling may be almost perfect. But they say nothing.

We would not be misunderstood. We know well if writing

is to be viewed publicly—placed on the bulletin board, sent home to the family, published as it were—then the mechanics must be in order. But that consideration should intervene much later, not in the act of creating.

In writing, as in all the other lively arts of language, we do want to keep alive that personal act of creative human interchange with others. We do not want children to absent themselves while the hand mechanically drags itself through a meaningless exercise. We want a child's writing to be as identifiable as his speaking. Indeed writing should be a child's other voice. As Robert Frost once said:

> A dramatic necessity goes deep into the nature of the

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> saves prose from itself.[6]

Indeed we want to lend our every effort in the schools for childhood to save all the lively arts of language from the "sing-song." Language which is sing-song, language which is mechanical and divorced from the person, is no language at all. What a child hears, speaks, reads, or writes must be deeply a part of him and in turn makes him deeply a part of the larger human family.

That is what we meant when early in our discussion we said that through language children define themselves. If we who work in the elementary schools do not help children to define themselves, we fail them during the shaping years, when the basic sculpture of the person is hewn. We dare not fail. In these times of all times, we dare not fail. For through all we do to help children develop the lively arts of language we must always be asking, with John Goodlad in *Saturday Review*:

What kinds of human beings do we seek? But even

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in all times and in all places?

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"WRITING TO LEARN AND LEARNING TO WRITE"

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Executive Secretary (retired)
Modern Language Association

"TRUTH VERSUS BEAUTY: AN INQUIRY INTO THE FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN AN ARTICULATE SOCIETY"

GEORGE E. KENT
Professor of English
University of Chicago

"SELF-CONSCIOUS WRITERS AND BLACK FOLK TRADITION"

WALTER LOBAN
Professor of Education
University of California, Berkeley

"GREEN PASTURES IN ELEMENTARY ENGLISH"

OWEN THOMAS
Professor of English
Indiana University

"TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT LANGUAGE"

* Names of additional lecturers to be announced.